

# Pennsylvania School Counselors Association

Annual Report 2024



# **Table of Contents**

Message from The Executive Director

Mission and Vision Statement

Board Report

Membership Overview

Professional Development

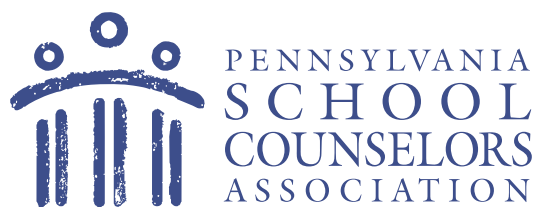
Legislative Update

2023-2024 Grants, Award and  
Scholarship Winners

Looking Ahead

Acknowledgments





**Dear Members and Educational Partners,**

We are thrilled to present the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association's Annual Report for the year 2024. Reflecting on the past year, we are proud of the strides we have made, the challenges we have addressed, and the profound impact we have had on students and educators across the Commonwealth.

In a dynamic educational landscape, school counselors are crucial in shaping students' futures. The Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSCA) remains a steadfast advocate for support, excellence and access, ensuring that every student benefits from skilled school counselors and the resources necessary to achieve their full potential.

Our commitment to equipping school counselors to develop their professional identity and deliver comprehensive programs is at the core of our mission. This report offers an overview of our key initiatives, accomplishments, and milestones over the past year. Together, we have navigated the complexities of education and adapted to the evolving needs of students, families, and school communities.

As you review this report, we invite you to reflect on the collaborative spirit and unwavering dedication that drive PSCA's impact in Pennsylvania's education sector. We are deeply grateful for the contributions of our members, partners, and supporters who have been instrumental in our journey.

Thank you for your continued support of PSCA. We encourage you to deepen your involvement with us. Together, we will keep empowering school counselors and guiding success, ensuring that every student in Pennsylvania has the opportunity to realize their dreams.

Warm regards,

**Emilia Mattucci**

Executive Director, Pennsylvania School Counselors Association

# Vision and Mission Statements

## The PSCA Vision Statement

*Pennsylvania School Counselors will be educated, empowered, and elevated to successfully implement comprehensive programming to ensure equitable academic, career, and social-emotional outcomes for all students.*

## The PSCA Mission Statement

*The Pennsylvania School Counselors Association responsibly promotes engagement and facilitates ethical and contemporary professional identity of school counselors across our diverse Commonwealth to ensure equitable educational outcomes for all students.*

---

## Board Summary

Dear PSCA Members,

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the remarkable progress our Association has made. Serving as the Chair of the Board of Directors has been a truly rewarding experience, and I am thrilled to continue in this role for the upcoming year!

This past year, we have achieved significant milestones that underscore our commitment to excellence in governance:

- **Upholding and Sustaining Excellence in Governance:** We undertook a comprehensive overhaul of our Association's Bylaws, which included reducing the size of the board over the course of the next 3 years, ultimately having 9 directors by the year 2027. In addition, the Board passed two complete policy manual updates and 13 individual policy edits, while also passing 22 new procedures and an entire procedure manual, reinforcing our commitment to effective governance. Leadership opportunities amongst the board have also been shared, giving everyone an equal voice, in addition to fully eliminating an "executive board" from within.
- **Achievement of Board Goals:** We proudly completed 100% of the board goals outlined in our newly created Annual Agenda, addressing all 69 items identified during our Leadership Development Academy.
- **Enhancing Onboarding and Mentoring:** We introduced an exit survey for departing board directors to assess and refine our onboarding and mentoring processes, ensuring a smooth transition and continued excellence.



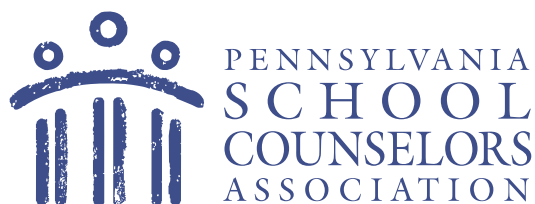
- **Revised Policies and Procedures:** We revised the Ends Policy monitoring calendar and created new parliamentary procedures, along with a Committee Terms of Reference agreement to guide operational and board collaboration.
- **Strategic Initiatives and Engagement:** We organized 12 task forces to address various board responsibilities, launched our first Emerging Leaders Program, and began discussions on revising our Ends Policies. Our first cohort of graduate ambassadors engaged with us during meetings and committee work, contributing fresh perspectives and energy!
- **Commitment to Transparency and Accountability:** We implemented new systems for transparency and accountability, completed an Annual Review to ensure adherence to our policies, and shared leadership opportunities across the board.
- **Successful Elections and Development:** We held successful board and chair/assistant chair elections, renewed our executive director's contract, and received ongoing consultation and professional development on policy governance. We also developed a procedural framework to guide our current and future secretaries in their roles.

As we move forward, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and am confident that our collective efforts will continue to drive positive change for our members. I look forward to working together to build on our achievements and tackle new challenges with the same dedication and enthusiasm that have defined our work this past year!

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to PSCA.  
Here's to another year of progress and growth, both personally and professionally!  
With gratitude and excitement,

**Larissa Valonis**

Larissa Valonis, PSCA Board Chair



## Membership Overview

PSCA is pleased to announce our membership totals:

	2024	2023
Associate	33	45
Student	124	97
Professional	1213	1192
Retired	13	23
Lifetime	14	11

**\*Reminder\*** In July 2022, PSCA began offering [group membership discounts](#) to districts who enroll all of their school counselors in membership

**The discount is 15% if all school counselors become members**

**15 school districts have already taken advantage of this discount.**

Interested in learning more? E-mail [Info@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:Info@paschoolcounselor.org) to get started today!

---

## Professional Development



### Student Support Beyond the Classroom

October 9, 2023  
In-Person & Virtual  
Bucks County IU

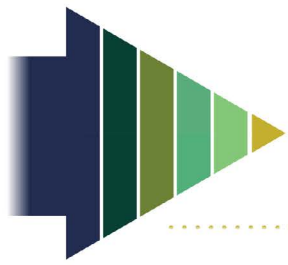


PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL  
COUNSELORS  
ASSOCIATION



pennsylvania  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

School Counselor Symposium 1 was on October 9th, 2023 in person and virtually. During this symposium, PDE and PSCA focused on Student Support Beyond the classroom. Sessions focused on Walkthrough of PA Maslow, Bridging (Secondary to Post Secondary), meeting the Insurance Commissioner (Micheal Humphreys, Pennsylvania Insurance Department and Re-Entry Plans.



# Student Mental Health Summit

November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Virtual Webinar



Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania  
Promoting best practices in school psychology

The Pennsylvania Youth Mental Health Summit was on November 8th, 2023.

This virtual summit gathered school-based and community mental health professionals, youth, policy-makers, and other vested partners to dialogue, share and lead in addressing Pennsylvania's growing mental health crisis, through awareness and cross-systems partnership and tiered supports.

Through a series of panels and rollout videos, the Summit identified key areas of policy reform, effective practices, and networks of support for students in and beyond the walls of school and across a lifetime. We thank our Keynote Speakers and our session leaders for their videos and continued leadership.

## Keynotes



Dr. Dana Milakovic serves as the Mental Wellness and Trauma Specialist for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), as well as the lead for the Social Emotional Wellness State System of Support. Dr. Milakovic is a mental health and trauma specialist with experience in school mental health, community mental health, pediatric neuropsychology, school administration, and school psychology. In her current role, she is focused on strengthening schools by applying neuropsychological research to mental health integration in schools, trauma-informed schools, school climate, substance use disorders, and improving mental wellness for students and school staff across Pennsylvania. Prior to her work at PDE, Dr. Milakovic spent over 17 years working on behalf of youth with special needs as a community mental health evaluator, school psychologist, and administrator.



Perri Rosen, PhD, NCSP, is a consulting psychologist at the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) at the Department of Human Services (DHS) in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She is also Pennsylvania licensed psychologist, Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP), and a Pennsylvania certified special educator. At DHS-OMHSAS, Dr. Rosen has helped lead several youth mental health and suicide prevention initiatives, many of which have focused on schools and cross-systems collaboration.

## Virtual Sessions

### PA Key Videos

1. An Important but Sensitive Topic
2. The Foundations of Mental Health
3. Tips for Professionals
4. Conversations About Children's Mental Health
5. Key Messages for Parents and Caregivers

*Release Date: 11/14/2023*

### Dr. Jennifer Kirk

PSCA

Re-Entry Plans

*Release Date: 11/22/2023*

### Dr. Christina Helfrick

President, PASSWP

Invitation to the Table

*Release Date: 11/22/2023*

### S.N Gajanan

University of Pittsburgh, Bradford

Pandemic Effects on Youth Mental Health

*Release Date: 11/29/2023*

### Dr. Terri Erbacher

School Suicide Prevention

*Release Date: 11/29/2023*

## PRE CONFERENCE



PRE-CONFERENCE

# Building Belonging



PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL  
COUNSELORS  
ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 6, 2023 | KALAHARI RESORTS & CONVENTIONS | POCONOS, PA

*Attend Virtually or In-Person*



**Dr. Nikole Hollins-Simms**

Keynote: ***A Dream is a Wish your Heart Makes***

**Proceeds of Pre Conference Attendance were given to Wallenpaupack School District for their Leadership and Diversity Committee.**

### ATTENDANCE:

**In Person: 65**

**Virtual: 7**

**Total: 72**



PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL  
COUNSELORS  
ASSOCIATION



# CONFERENCE



## **Conference Attendance was 278 in person and Kalahari in the Poconos and 67 attendees were virtual. PSCA's Annual Conference: It's all about belonging!**

Our 68th Annual Conference was held at the beautiful Kalahari Resort in the Poconos! The theme began with "Building Belonging" in pre-conference and led to "Being and Belonging" at conference. This year's conference was not only held in person, but offered a virtual option as well. There was much excitement in the air as we gathered for quality professional development, networking opportunities, and a much-needed respite.

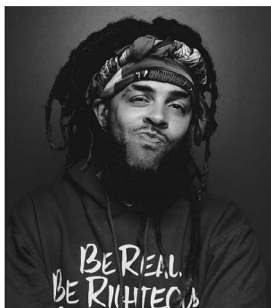
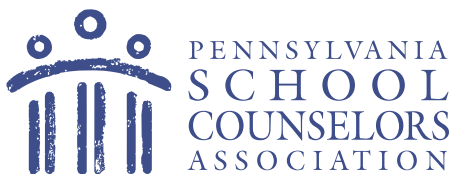
We kicked off with our pre-conference, which was held on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. The topic of the pre-conference was an Equity Summit, which addressed the equity and access challenges encountered by students in our schools and offered several strategies to combat this growing problem. PSCA brought together not only school counselors, but school librarians, school psychologists, behavioral healthcare professionals, legislators and many others to share their resources and knowledge in supporting student attendance. The highlight was hearing from the Leadership and Diversity Committee at Wallenpaupack High School. These students shared their stories of working to build awareness of different cultures and acceptance for all students within their school community. We were honored to have Dr. Nikole Hollins-Sims deliver the keynote address, "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes". It's our hope that our continued partnership with other student support professionals will help to increase awareness and student outcomes in the areas of equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Day 1 of the conference on December 7th kicked off with a welcome from PSCA Board Chair Larissa Valonis, followed by an introduction of the Board of Directors. Then, our Keynote speaker, Dee-1, energized the crowd with his positive message of belonging within his family and community. He even got conference attendees to rap along with him on a few of his songs. Afterwards, participants were able to engage in workshops that included advocacy, ethics, evaluations, career development, and self-care as well as the chance to observe eight graduate student poster sessions.

In addition, several outstanding school counselors and affiliates were honored at the Recognition Luncheon. Among those who were recognized was PSCA's School Counselor of the Year, Ms. Kelsey Davis. Other recognitions went to Dr. Richard Joseph Behun from Millersville University for School Counselor Educator of the Year, Dr. Megan Luft from Shippensburg University for Advocate of the Year, Helen Gym as the Legislator of the Year, and Ms. Maria Miller, Administrator of the Year. In addition, Madelyn Reilly was awarded the Bill Lee Leadership Grant as a first-time attendee of a PSCA conference. Also, two schools were the first to achieve

Grant as a first-time attendee of a PSCA conference. Also, two schools were the first to achieve PSCA's PA Diamond Recognition: Elizabethtown Middle School and Western Wayne Elementary School. Plus, a special shout out went to Mrs. Carley Czegan for receiving the designation as an ASCA certified school counselor. Congratulations to all of our award winners! Finally, we honored the service of outgoing Board Directors Dr. Adam Oldham and Michelle Strasser. Thank you both for your dedication and hard work to PSCA!! Thursday evening capped off with a visit to our exhibit hall for a "Fun Night" sponsored by Smart Futures where attendees could network and play bingo to win some great prizes. PSCA was proud to have over 60 exhibitors in the exhibit hall and to have three platinum and one gold sponsor of our conference! Those sponsors were The Milton Hershey School, the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, Smart Futures, and Shippensburg University. We wish to thank them and all of the sponsors for their generous support of PSCA and the school counseling profession.

The final day of the conference brought Keynote speaker Dr. Rebecca Pianta to speak to conference attendees. She talked about the importance of using data to make sure students belong where their talents are. She encouraged school counselors to analyze data and advocate for the needs of our students. Other notable workshops on Friday focused on becoming a culturally competent school counselor, executive functioning skills, gender support plans, universal screenings, emerging leaders, and the new PA Diamond Recognition program.



**Thursday,  
December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Opening  
Keynote:  
Dee-1**



**Thursday,  
December 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Opening Keynote:  
Dr. Rebecca Pianta**

# Bridging Belonging PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

## Keynote Session and Workshops

Laura Fridirici, Career Readiness Advisor at PDE, will share the newly proposed revisions to the Career Education and Work (CEW) Standards. As the standards move through the regulatory review process, what can school counselors do to prepare for implementation in July 2026? What will these revisions mean to school counselors and the students we serve? What are schools doing now that aligns to the upcoming standards? The new standard of Employability Skills is an area of alignment and essential for career and life readiness. We thank Laura for her time during this educational session on CEW Standards. Additionally, workshops were held after the Keynote. The workshops were on Trauma and Crisis, Evidence Based Practices, Post Secondary Readiness and DEI & School Climate.

**ATTENDANCE: 104**

## Legislative Update

[The Pennsylvania School Counseling Services Act](#) had significant movement in SY 23-24. The bill was reintroduced as HB 1665 in September 2023, it was discussed at a hearing of the House Education Committee in January 2024, and then it passed out of the House Education Committee on January 18, 2024. On March 25, 2024, HB 1665 passed the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and it was sent over to the Pennsylvania Senate on April 4, 2024. PSCA engaged with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, as well as school administrators and PDE, to introduce a Senate version of the School Counseling Services Act (SB 33) on June 7, 2024. On June 25, 2024 almost 100 school counselors visited the Pennsylvania Capitol to advocate for HB 1665 and SB 33, where they participated in a press event on the Capitol steps with lawmakers from both the House and the Senate, PSEA President Aaron Chapin, school counselor educators, and past school counselors of the year. Attendees visited every Senate office and dropped off material about HB 1665 and SB 33, and several groups were able to meet with their Senator or their staff.

HB 1665 and SB 33 both currently sit in the hands of the Senate Education Committee. PSCA will continue to engage with the General Assembly to push this legislation across the finish line and ensure all Pennsylvania students have access to school counseling services provided by certified school counselors.





## 2023-2024: Awards, Grants and Scholarship Winners

### Bill Lee Scholarship Grant



**Madelyn Reilly**



2023-2024

### Legislator of the Year



**Helen Gym**



2023-2024

### Advocate of the Year



**Dr. Megan Luft**



2023-2024

### Administrator of the Year



**Maria Miller**



2023-2024

### School Counselor Educator of the Year



**Dr. Richard  
Joseph Behun**



2023-2024

### PSCA School Counselor of the Year



**Kelsey Davis**



2023-2024



## **PA has developed its own version of the RAMP designation called the “PA Diamond Recognition”.**

We’ve created a PA application in the same portal that ASCA uses.

### **What are the advantages of doing this?**

If you or an additional applicant holds dual membership with ASCA and PSCA, the application fee will be paid for you by PSCA.

If your school is deemed to have achieved the PA Diamond Recognition, your application will automatically be forwarded to ASCA and will also achieve RAMP with no additional work needed by you.

Keep in mind that the PA Diamond Recognition applicant has two extra sections specific to the CEW Standards. These sections will be included in the RAMP Camp Training videos on the “Members Only Section”



**Congratulations to this years winner, Erica Germani**  
from Western Wayne Elementary School and they re-ramped!!



## Looking Ahead

In the coming year, PSCA will focus on:

- PSCA will focus on professional development specifically targeted to help school counselors develop and implement comprehensive school counseling programs.
- Strengthen School Counselor identity through advocacy.
- Enhancing member engagement through new Listening Sessions, networking opportunities and resources.

We are excited about the opportunities ahead and remain committed to supporting school counselors across Pennsylvania.

### SAVE THE DATE

# CHANGE IT UP!

SYMPOSIUM #1:

**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 14<sup>TH</sup>**

(IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL)

SYMPOSIUM #2:

**COLLEGE AND CAREER**

**AWARENESS**

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>**

(VIRTUAL)

SYMPOSIUM #3:

**SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>**

(IN-PERSON)

69<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PSCA CONFERENCE

# FLIP THE SCRIPT

*renewing and reshaping school counseling programs*

## Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere thanks to all our members, sponsors, partners, and volunteers who have contributed to our success this year. Your dedication and support are vital to our mission, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

## PSCA Committees:



**LEZLIE DELVECCHIO-MARKS**  
LINKAGES AND OUTREACH  
ldelvecchio-marks@  
paschoolcounselor.org



**BRIANNA EDWARDS**  
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR  
pscamemberservices@gmail.com  
jkirk@paschoolcounselor.org



**LISA FULTON**  
PA DIAMOND AWARD  
fultonl@carliseschools.org



**CHRISTINA GREEN**  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
pd@paschoolcounselor.org



**HEATHER KARMAZIN**  
CHAIR GRADUATE AMBASSADORS  
hkarmazin@paschoolcounselor.org



**NICOLE LEVIS**  
SPONSORSHIPS & EXHIBITS  
sponsorexhibit@  
paschoolcounselor.org



**AMY LUCAS**  
ACT 48 COORDINATOR  
officepsca@paschoolcounselor.org



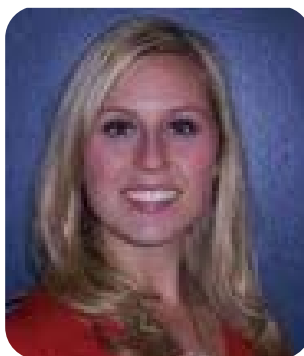
**LISA MALONEY**  
COMMITTEE COORDINATOR  
committees@paschoolcounselor.org



**ADAM OLDHAM**  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS  
aoldham@paschoolcounselor.org



**JANELLE REESE**  
EMERGING LEADERS CO-CHAIR  
[jreese@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:jreese@paschoolcounselor.org)



**LINDSAY SMITH**  
RECOGNITIONS  
[recognitions@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:recognitions@paschoolcounselor.org)



**STEPHANIE STEIGERWALT**  
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS  
(CO CHAIR)  
[ssteigerwalt@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:ssteigerwalt@paschoolcounselor.org)



**MICHELLE STRASSER**  
EMERGING LEADERS CO-CHAIR  
[mstrasser@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:mstrasser@paschoolcounselor.org)



**COLLEEN TORTORELLA**  
SPONSORSHIPS & EXHIBITS  
[sponsorexhibit@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:sponsorexhibit@paschoolcounselor.org)



**DR. DIANA WILDERMUTH**  
ETHICS CHAIR  
[pscaethics@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:pscaethics@paschoolcounselor.org)



**LAURA ZAHARAKIS**  
SCHOLARSHIP  
[scholarship@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:scholarship@paschoolcounselor.org)

---

**Are you interested in joining any of these committees?**

Please e-mail Lisa Maloney, [committees@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:committees@paschoolcounselor.org)



## **PSCA is Stronger because of our Collaborations with the Following Organizations**



**#CareerReadyPA**



# PSCA Leadership—2024-2025



**Emilia Mattucci**  
Executive Director



**Larissa Valonis**  
Board Chair



**Zachary Watters**  
Assistant Board  
Chair



**Chris Bard**  
Secretary



**Ann Jordan**  
Treasurer



**Ann Kostiuk**  
Northcentral  
Regional Unit  
IUs: 9, 16, 17



**Michael  
Simmons (2025)**  
Northwest  
Regional Unit  
IUs 4, 5, 6, 28



**Michelle  
Strasser (2024)**  
Northwest  
Regional Unit  
IUs 4, 5, 6, 28



**Janelle Reese  
(2025)**  
Central  
Regional Unit  
IUs 8, 10, 11



**Heather  
Karmazin (2025)**  
Southeast  
Regional Unit  
IUs 22, 23, 24,  
25, 26



**Lezlie  
DelVecchio  
Marks (2025)**  
Southwest  
Regional Unit  
IUs 1, 2, 3, 7, 27



**Matthew  
Shervington  
-Jackson (2025)**  
Southcentral  
Regional Unit  
IUs: 12, 13, 15



**Zachary Watters  
(2024)**  
Northeast  
Regional Unit  
IUs 18, 19



**Larissa Valonis  
(2025)**  
Northeast  
Regional Unit  
IUs 18, 19



**Stephanie  
Steigerwalt (2024)**  
Northeast  
Regional Unit  
IUs 18, 19



**Brandi  
McFarland (2025)**  
Centraleast  
Regional Unit  
IUs 14, 20, 21, 29



# GET IN TOUCH

400 Winding Creek Blvd  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050  
833-770-1546

[info@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:info@paschoolcounselor.org)

## Follow Us on Social Media:



**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/PSCAFB>



**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/mypsca/>

