



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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State Superintendent of Education

Alabama
State Board
of Education

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Governor Kay Ivey
President

**ALABAMA EDUCATOR DIANA VIRGIL SELECTED
2024 NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR**

Jackie Zeigler
District I

Montgomery, Ala. – Dr. Diana Virgil of Alabama’s Daleville High School has been named the *2024 School Counselor of the Year* by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).

Tracie West
District II
Vice President



Dr. Virgil has been a school counselor since 2015 and works on a school campus that serves 346 students in grades 9–12.

Stephanie Bell
District III

She is the 17th person to receive the national recognition and the first from Alabama.

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.
District IV

Virgil received her bachelor’s, master’s and educational specialist degrees from Mississippi College and a doctorate degree from University of the Columbians. She is an ASCA-Certified School Counselor, a National Certified School Counselor, and a National Certified Counselor.

Tonya S. Chestnut, Ed.D.
District V
President Pro Tem

“Right from the start, Dr. Virgil demonstrated her deep knowledge of and commitment to a

Marie Manning
District VI

comprehensive school counseling program,” said Erin O’Malley, a member of the School Counselor of the Year Selection Committee and principal at St. Theresa Catholic School, Ashburn, Va. “Throughout the interview process, Diana presented as an energetic and caring professional, with a deep compassion for her students and desire for them to succeed.”

Belinda McRae
District VII

“In my opinion, Dr. Virgil is the epitome of what any school counselor should be,” said Lashundra Straw, Daleville High School student. “She is not only knowledgeable but also passionate about her field and is committed to making a difference in the lives of others. She is the heart of the school and makes the community feel complete.”

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.
District VIII

Many Daleville High School students are trailblazers in their families, aiming to become top graduates. When Virgil was hired, she noticed a significant number of students were not participating in dual-enrollment classes due to a lack of awareness, limited college aspirations, transportation challenges and financial constraints. Virgil promptly established a partnership with the local community college to boost student enrollment.

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
Secretary and
Executive Officer

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A significant turning point came when the college received a grant to provide eligible students with free tuition and books for dual enrollment, revolutionizing the opportunities for students to earn both high school and college credit.

To address transportation challenges, Virgil worked with the college to implement online courses and enlisted teachers to teach dual enrollment courses at the high school. Her approaches increased the number of students in dual-enrollment courses from four to more than 40 each semester.

This year, the school is on course to graduate its very first student with both a high school diploma and an associate degree in science, along with its first student with a mechatronics certification from the aviation college.

As a result of Virgil's extensive collaboration and advocacy efforts, Daleville High School now offers dual-enrollment courses in science, English, and math. For Virgil, the most rewarding part of her work as a school counselor is the opportunity to be a support system for her students.

"Each day that I have the privilege of going to Daleville High School and giving my students my best, that's where I find the most rewarding feeling," she said.

The School Counselor of the Year and all finalists will be celebrated in Washington, D.C., in February 2024 and will participate in nationwide and online events during National School Counseling Week, Feb. 5–9, 2024.

"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."

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