



## Oregon Assistant Principal Named 2026 Illinois Assistant Principal of the Year

The Illinois Principals Association and Horace Mann Companies are pleased to announce that **Shannon Cremeens, Assistant Principal of Oregon Jr./Sr. High School**, has been named the 2026 Illinois Assistant Principal of the Year. The award recognizes assistant principals who have demonstrated a positive impact on their students and the learning community.

Shannon Cremeens has served as assistant principal of Oregon Jr./Sr. High School for the last two years and a school administrator for nine. Active in the Illinois Principals Association for a decade, she currently serves as Assistant Principals Chairperson and has held roles as statewide board member and regional secretary. She has also presented topics such as post-secondary readiness, freshman student support, leadership as an assistant principal, and mentoring.

Cremeens received her Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Master of Science in Counseling from Western Illinois University, Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Monmouth College, and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Western Illinois University. She has also earned a certificate in School Discipline Reform from Loyola University, Chicago.

Cremeens began her career in education as a school counselor at AlWood Jr./Sr. High School (Woodhull), and later as Director of Counseling at Oregon High School. As counselor, she learned the importance of school culture in supporting students' emotional and physical well-being. "Over the past ten years in administration, I have continued using the same relationship-centered strategies that guided me as a counselor; focusing on strong community connections to foster a safe, inclusive, and responsive environment where everyone in our school community can feel valued and supported."

Cremeens' pursuit of a certificate in School Discipline Reform prompted a revision of the student handbook that emphasized equitable, restorative approaches, while maintaining accountability. For the past 5 years, Cremeens has advanced equity through leadership in the Oregon Educational Equity Consultants program, deepening the school's collective understanding of identity, bias, and inclusive practices.

**Jennifer Speakes, principal of Oregon Jr./Sr. High School**, shared, "(Shannon's) background as a counselor enhances her ability to build strong relationships with students, families, and staff, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Beyond her school responsibilities, she is an active contributor to district committees and community partnerships that strengthen opportunities for students."

“Shannon leads our social-emotional learning team with vision and empathy, oversees homeless student services with unmatched compassion, and drives our acceleration protocol; one of the most aggressive and effective in the state,” added **Dr. P.J. Caposey, Superintendent of Oregon Community Unit School District #220**. “She is relentless in pursuit of what’s right, balancing urgency with care, and accountability with grace. She is deeply respected by teachers, trusted by families, and beloved by students.”

Fellow **Assistant Principal, Kip Crandall**, added, “(Shannon) works tirelessly to create systems for students that help them better understand what they have to offer both academically and behaviorally, all the while making them feel a sense of worth and belonging.”

The Assistant Principal of the Year winner was selected from a pool of region nominees provided by the 21 Regions of the Illinois Principals Association. Shannon Cremeens will be recognized at the IPA’s Education Leaders Annual Conference in October.

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*The Illinois Principals Association is a leadership organization which serves over 6,800 educational leaders throughout the state of Illinois. You can find out more about the IPA at [www.ilprincipals.org](http://www.ilprincipals.org). Visit <http://www.ilprincipals.org/about-ipa/awards> for more information about the IPA Principal of the Year Awards Program.*

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