

Illinois Principals Association Announces 2026 John Ourth & Dr. Fred Singleton Professional Development Scholarship Recipients

The Illinois Principals Association is pleased to announce Tia-Farrah Edwards, Dean of Student Affairs at Moline High School in Moline, Shonda Ronen, Principal of Wolf Ridge Education Center in Bunker Hill, and Erin Woodson, Assistant Principal of Pioneer Elementary in Bolingbrook, as recipients of the 2026 John Ourth and Dr. Fred Singleton Professional Development Scholarships. Scholarship grants help individuals pursue graduate study, attend national conferences, and attend other relevant professional development to further the capacities of school administrators to be instructional leaders.

Tia-Farrah Edwards has served as Dean of Student Affairs at Moline High School since 2023 and previously served as a school administrator in the Rock Island-Milan School District, and English teacher at Rock Island High School. Edwards serves as Diversity and Equity Chairperson and Deans Representative for the Blackhawk region of the Illinois Principals Association. Edwards shared, “My approach to professional growth includes pursuing an advanced degree, joining civic and professional organizations, and serving on leadership boards to support undergraduate students. These experiences help me better understand how our generation is changing and growing, and how to create more opportunities for me to support my students and our community.” Edwards is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in K-12 Organizational Leadership at Western Illinois University.

Shonda Ronen has served as Principal of Wolf Ridge Education Center and Curriculum Director for Bunker Hill Community Unit School District #8 since 2018. As a leader in Bunker Hill CUSD 8, Ronen began a Community Inclusion Team to provide resources for families and serves as Diversity and Equity Chairperson for the Kaskaskia region of the Illinois Principals Association. Ronen shared, “My commitment to growth includes professional development and service on many boards and leadership forums. Through constant reflection, self-awareness, and critical feedback, I strive to continually improve my service to our students and families.” Ronen is currently pursuing her superintendent endorsement and wants to continue to advocate for public schools, leaders, and students across the state.

Erin Woodson, Assistant Principal of Pioneer Elementary in Bolingbrook, previously served as an Instructional Coach in Oak Park Elementary School District 97, and as an elementary teacher in

Oak Park ESD 97 and Chicago Public Schools. Woodson has a goal to help recruit and maintain more leaders of color into the profession. She shared, “I believe a principal must be motivational, empathetic and adaptable to be effective instructional leaders. My approach as a building leader is to lead with empathy. As I grow as a leader, I hope to help build more leaders who prioritize people.”

The John Ourth & Dr. Fred Singleton Professional Development Scholarships were established in 2007 to recognize the contributions of John Ourth and Dr. Fred Singleton, former Field Directors for the Illinois Principals Association. Three \$1,000 scholarships are awarded each year. Mr. Ourth passed away shortly after the creation of the scholarship on December 10, 2007. Dr. Singleton retired in 2014 after 50 years of service in education.

Edwards, Ronen, and Woodson will be recognized at a special ceremony during the IPA Education Leaders Annual Conference in October.

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. Visit <http://www.ilprincipals.org/about-ipa/awards> for more information about Professional Development Scholarships.

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