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For Immediate Release

Horace Mann and Illinois Principals Association Announce 2021 Illinois Assistant Principal of the Year

Horace Mann and the Illinois Principals Association are pleased to announce that Sara Kash, Assistant Principal of Liberty School, Orland Park, has been named the 2021 Illinois Assistant Principal of the Year. The award recognizes assistant principals who have demonstrated a positive impact on their students and learning community. Criteria for the award include:

- Demonstrates a positive impact on education and advocacy for children
- Ensures the school climate is positive and reflects high staff and student morale
- Moves actively to implement the goals and objectives of the school
- Works collaboratively with teachers and other staff to improve the educational program and student achievement
- Involves the community in the life of the school and uses community resources for students.

Sara Kash has served as assistant principal at Liberty School in Orland Park for 3 years and was a teacher in the Schiller Park & Blue Island areas for 12 years prior. She has been a member of IPA since becoming an assistant principal in 2018. Sara virtually hosted a legislator this past Fall as part of IPA's Principal for a Day program as well as supporting the South Cook Region's Student Recognition Breakfast.

"Effective instructional leaders know that relationships are the foundation of the success of the community of learners. Engaging families, students, and staff in school planning, leadership and meaningful volunteer opportunities helps to develop and strengthen this connection," said Kash. "We've hosted Parent Universities and Principal Coffees in the fall and spring to educate and support parents on standards based grading, instructional technology, and social emotional learning."

Sara is passionate about the incorporation of restorative justice, trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive teaching. She, together with her building principal, led a staff book study on *Hacking School Discipline* and organized a professional learning day on trauma informed practices and restorative justice led by the authors of *Hacking School Discipline*. Now, restorative conversations are happening across the building and district with the focus on mutual respect, responsibility, and repairing the harm.

"Orland 135 has undergone significant changes in regards to diversity since Sara has joined the team. Liberty School is one of the most diverse," shared Dr. Lynn Zeder, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning for District 135. "In the last several years, they have had to hire bilingual teachers for Arabic, Polish and Spanish. It also has one of the higher rates of low-income students. Sara has her ESL endorsement. Therefore, she is understanding of the legal obligations one must follow as a district. But more importantly, Sara embraces inclusivity."

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. Kash will be recognized at the IPA's annual Education Leaders Annual Conference in October 2021.

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The Illinois Principals Association is a leadership organization which serves over 5,800 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 the IPA Principal of the Year Awards Program.

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