*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | May 19, 2022 |
| **Subject:** | 2022 Massachusetts School Counselor of the Year, Tama Lang – Presentation to Board |

School counselors play an essential role in preparing students to be college- and career-ready and helping meet their social and emotional needs. During the pandemic, school counselors’ role has greatly expanded. This spring, we celebrate and honor the work of all school counselors, exemplified by the Massachusetts School Counselor of the Year, **Tama Lang,** school counselor at Sgt. Robert R. Litwin Elementary School in Chicopee. I am delighted that Ms. Lang will join us at the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting on May 24.

Ms. Lang was honored by the Massachusetts School Counselor Association (MASCA) in February 2022 and will represent Massachusetts in Washington, D.C. at the National School Counselor of the Year Gala in February 2023. She will compete with other state winners from around the country for the 2023 American School Counselor Association's School Counselor of the Year award.

Ms. Lang serves as an elementary school counselor for over 350 K-5 students at Litwin School, where she implements a comprehensive school counseling program that includes advocacy, leadership, systemic change, and collaboration. She uses a multi-tiered system of support to help all students, gathering data from various sources including formal and informal surveys, the Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS), and student observations. Ms. Lang is described as a “guiding light” for staff, students, and families at her school.

Equitable support for all students is at the heart of Ms. Lang’s work. She examines policies, procedures, and practices to determine their impact on students and is an active member of several committees in the Chicopee Public Schools. These include the Integrating SEL Into Academics Committee, on which she researches methods of incorporating social-emotional learning to ensure that all students have access to counseling program support; the SELIS (Social and Emotional Learning Indicator Systems) Project Data Review Committee, on which she has reviewed SEL data for Litwin and the Chicopee school district; and the ALANA (African-American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American) educators group, which meets monthly to discuss systemic changes necessary for students, especially students of color, to feel safe and supported in schools.

Ms. Lang believes collaboration is more necessary than ever to make a school counseling program successful. She collaborates extensively with administrators, teachers, families, and community agencies. She also works with fellow elementary school counselors to discuss complex cases, share best practices and resources, and examine diversity, equity, and inclusion topics.

Ms. Lang embraces the school counseling profession with her heart. She is genuinely committed to building a comprehensive school counseling program for Litwin Elementary from a foundation of advocacy, leadership, systemic change, and collaboration. Her actions and professionalism have earned her the admiration of students, parents, faculty, colleagues, and the community. In honoring her as School Counselor of the Year, MASCA Executive Director Robert Bardwell said, "MASCA is proud to honor such a dedicated and passionate school counselor as the 2022 School Counselor of the Year, especially in a year with so many additional challenges. Tama is truly an inspiration to all of us."

We are pleased to welcome Ms. Lang to our meeting on May 24, when she will make a presentation to the Board sharing her experiences as a school counselor.