

# Leading Learning Award

## March 2025



Dea Hill

Our SSO, Dea Hill, is a rock star for our Adult Ed program at our Wyoming program, as well as for Empower U South. Dea excels at building positive relationships with our students, regardless of their background or the language they speak. Dea is always taking initiative to help out with tasks when she sees a need. During the open registration period that was held at Adult Ed during the first week of January, our office was overflowing with people seeking to enroll in either GED or ESL classes and it was an "all hands on deck" situation. Dea did not hesitate to jump right in to help get students started on the registration process while still maintaining order and security. In addition to her willingness to help out, SSO Hill is always thinking about ways to improve safety and efficiency within our office and hallways. Recently, she recognized the need for installation of a 180 degree mirror in the main entrance vestibule after identifying a major blind spot for herself and office staff when monitoring the building entrance. Dea collaborated with our facilities team to get this mirror installed. For what might seem like a simple act, it has made a dramatic difference in our ability to monitor for student and staff safety and security and is just one of many examples of Dea's foresight and care for others. We are truly blessed in our building to have an SSO who truly understands what that old adage, "Teamwork makes the dream work!" Thank you, Dea, for all you do.



Rachel VandenBrink

Rachel exemplifies what it means to be a Leader of Learning. As one of only four ISD Nurse Coordinators in Michigan, she has skillfully shaped her role to enhance the development and delivery of high-quality school nursing, health services and other student-focused initiatives. Rachel drives this work through professional development opportunities and community partnerships. Her commitment to collaboration and her focus on health, safety, and the whole-child well-being make her an invaluable asset to her colleagues, students, and county. Rachel serves as the key liaison with the Kent County Health Department, providing support for health policies and procedures across the county. Rachel's leadership extends statewide and nationally - she is a past president of the Michigan Association of School Nurses and was recently selected to serve on the National Association of School Nurses Board of Directors.

One of Rachel's contributions to the field is her mentorship of new school nurses. She is passionate about guiding them as they navigate their new roles, fostering their growth and success. Her dedication to professional learning is evident through the trainings she offers, including, School Health 101, Youth Mental Health First Aid, MERT Trainings, and Plans of Care. Rachel is committed to collaboration, elevating the profession of school nursing, and addressing the evolving health needs of students. She is truly deserving of this Leader of Learning award.