

Karen Schwartz

*IMSA Counselor
MA, LCPC*



My name is Karen Schwartz and I am so excited to be a part of the counseling staff at IMSA. I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) with a Masters in Community Counseling. I am also certified in Illinois as a School Counselor with a Type 73 certificate.

My path towards coming to IMSA has taken a few twists and turns, which have taught me a great deal. Originally, I am from Syosset, New York, but have been living in Chicago for about ten years. I love the Chicagoland area and definitely consider it my home. Currently, I live in Chicago with my husband, our son, and our two cats. Over the years, I've had the

good fortune to live in Singapore for three years as a child and in Shanghai, China just a few years ago.

I went to Syosset High School and later Binghamton University in New York for undergrad. In high school, I did relatively well in school, was a part of many clubs, ran track, and coached synchronized swimming. Yes, you read that right...synchronized swimming. I really had no clue what I wanted to do for a career when I was in high school. At the time, I remember wanting to move to France and teach English. I suppose I always had a travel bug in me.

I chose to attend Binghamton because it is an excellent New York state school. In general, I was the sort of kid who didn't really ask too many questions about what I was passionate about. I think I was scared of the answers I would get. Although I always was interested in psychology, I had myself convinced that I couldn't go to grad school due to the belief that I shouldn't go into debt for graduate work. As a result, I chose to major in Management with a Marketing concentration and enter the business world as salesperson. My dad was in sales and I thought that that was a logical next step. As a salesperson, I enjoyed meeting new people, but I did not like selling them things. I wanted to talk to my clients about deeper matters and truly make a difference.

After a great deal of self-reflection, I chose to take a leap of faith and return to grad school to become a therapist. I attended Argosy University (formerly Illinois School of Professional Psychology) for my Masters in Community Counseling. My internship took place at an international school in Shanghai, China. That experience taught me a great deal about myself, being an immigrant, and the population I wanted to help as a counselor. One of the biggest lessons I learned was that I loved working with students. That surprised me. I always thought that I wanted to work with adults prior to that internship. I'll always be grateful to that experience.

Upon returning from China, I enrolled at Concordia University to earn a Type 73 Certificate, which allows me to be a licensed School Counselor in Illinois. While earning this certificate, I counseled and

assessed adults who had severe mental illnesses along with working as a School Counseling Intern at Niles West High School.

My last position was as a School Counselor and Case Manager at a Pre-kindergarten through 8th grade elementary school in Chicago Public Schools. Not only did I have the pleasure of counseling and helping students with a variety of concerns, but I also led the special education process.

My approach to counseling students is eclectic overall. I strongly believe in meeting my students wherever they are in the process of change. I am influenced by Rogers in building relationships with others, but also utilize other approaches as warranted by the person and the situation.

On a personal note, as I mentioned above, I am married and have a young son. My son, who is one year old, keeps me very busy running after him. He is a wonderful and curious little boy. In my spare time, I love spending time with my family and our cats. I love trying out new restaurants, traveling, reading, and jogging (when I can find the time).

I look forward to working with the students at IMSA and can be reached at 630-907-5070 or kschwartz@imsa.edu.