



North Carolina School Superintendents' Association
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**Halifax County Schools Superintendent Selected as 2024
NCSSA Dr. Dwayne Stallings Leadership (NERESA) Award Winner**

The North Carolina School Superintendents' Association (NCSSA) has announced the selection of Dr. Eric Cunningham, Superintendent of Halifax County Schools, as the recipient of the Dr. Dwayne Stallings Leadership Award. The award is presented in honor and recognition of a superintendent who has demonstrated a strong dedication to public education, commitment to academic excellence, and a continual focus on professional growth and student learning.

This award is presented to a superintendent serving a school district in northeast North Carolina who is a member of the Northeast Regional Education Service Alliance (NERESA). NERESA is a professional alliance that supports and enhances educational services and resources for the member districts. These include facilitating professional development opportunities and promoting communication between the districts and state agencies, professional organizations, elected officials, and educational leaders.

The award is named in honor of Dr. Dwayne Stallings who was serving as the Executive Director of the NERESA at the time of his death on August 9, 2020 at the age of 63. Dr. Stallings began his career in education teaching in the Chowan, Gates, and Pasquotank school districts. He later served in the Perquimans County School System as the Assistant Principal of the High School, Principal of Central Elementary School in Winfall, Principal of the High School, Assistant Superintendent, and lastly as Superintendent. Dr. Stallings also served as an Adjunct Professor at ECU after retirement.

As an educational leader, Dr. Stallings served as a head coach or assistant coach in three different school districts. He served on the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Board of Directors and in 2015 he received the Bob McRae Superintendent of the Year award, named for Bob McRae, a former school superintendent in Randolph County and former president of the NCHSAA. Dr. Stallings was named the NERESA Superintendent of the Year in 2013 and a nominee for the A. Craig Phillips Superintendent of the Year award.

Quote from Dr. Eric Cunningham:

“Accepting this award is a true honor. The Dr. Dwayne Stallings Leadership Award is a deeply meaningful acknowledgment of not only myself but also the collective efforts and dedication of the Halifax County Schools team. I am privileged to work alongside talented individuals who continually inspire and drive Halifax County

Schools forward. This recognition fuels our commitment to continue striving for excellence and making a meaningful difference in our community. Let's continue to inspire and lead with purpose."

In selecting the award winner, the following criteria were considered:

- Dedication to public educational leadership resulting in innovative programs for student success.
- Commitment to academic excellence through collaboration with local and state educational leaders.
- Continual focus on professional growth through personal learning and providing continuous learning opportunities for school district leaders.

NCSSA Executive Director Jack Hoke said the following: "Dr. Cunninghame has served as superintendent of the Halifax County Schools for eight years and he exemplifies the traits that guided Dr. Dwayne Stallings career in educational leadership. He has demonstrated a strong dedication to public education, commitment to academic excellence, and a continual focus on professional growth and student learning for the Halifax County Schools. He is very deserving of the leadership award honoring Dr. Stallings."

Brief description of Dr. Cunningham's achievement as superintendent:

Under Dr. Cunningham's leadership, the Halifax County School District has achieved significant milestones, including improved student academic performance, successful community partnerships, and enhanced educational programs. Superintendent Cunningham serves as a dedicated navigator, guiding the school district through educational challenges with a strong focus on equity and inclusion. His tenure has been defined by insisting every single student receives the support they need to thrive. The journey to academic excellence is marked by key achievements such as the implementation of action-based learning, the integration of technology into the curriculum, the enhancement of student learning environments through capital improvements, the administration of comprehensive safety measures, and the fostering of a positive and collaborative culture ensuring the district remains a beacon of excellence. With determination, Halifax County Schools is charting a new course to student achievement.

Congratulations to Dr. Eric Cunningham on this well-deserved recognition!

Photo of Dr. Eric Cunningham and Jack Hoke