

PERSON COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT WINS BURROUGHS WELLCOME FUND 2026 A. CRAIG PHILLIPS NC SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD



GREENSBORO | Dr. Rodney Peterson, Superintendent of Person County Schools, was named the Burroughs Wellcome Fund 2026 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year at an awards presentation and banquet held Thursday, Oct. 9, at the Grandover Resort.

This prestigious annual honor is presented jointly by the [North Carolina Association of School Administrators \(NCASA\)](#) and the [North Carolina School Superintendents' Association](#)

[\(NCSSA\)](#), and includes a \$5,000 award to the winner. The state award ceremony and selections process is sponsored by the [Burroughs Wellcome Fund \(BWF\)](#).

Jack Hoke, NCSSA's Executive Director who presented the award, praised Dr. Peterson's leadership that led to his receiving this state recognition. "It is a great honor to present Dr. Rodney Peterson with this award," Hoke said. "Dr. Peterson has been a champion for children throughout his career as an educator and as a district leader. He is a great professional and is held in high regard by those in his community and statewide by his peers."

Dr. Peterson has served in public education for more than two decades and has served as a Superintendent of Person County Schools since 2017. During his tenure, he has worked to address systemic inequities, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students who were underperforming in reading proficiency compared to their peers. To close these gaps, Dr. Peterson spearheaded the launch of a Dual Language Immersion program, leveraging bilingualism as an academic accelerator while fostering equity through culturally sustaining instruction that has helped narrow achievement gaps between historically underserved students and their peers. This initiative has expanded into a K-8 bilingual pathway, and planning is under way to extend it into STEM programming and to continue building systemic solutions that transform student achievement across the district.

In accepting the award, Dr. Peterson expressed deep gratitude for the recognition and acknowledged the dedication of his colleagues across the state.

"There's 114 people more deserving of this. Every day they sacrifice family, and they sacrifice time. And to be recognized amongst them, to be able to represent them, is an honor."

As the Burroughs Wellcome Fund 2026 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Peterson will compete at the national level for the Superintendent of the Year Award, to be given at the [American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education](#) Feb. 12-14, in Nashville, TN.

"The Burroughs Wellcome Fund is pleased to sponsor the NC Superintendent of the Year Award and banquet to celebrate the commitment to excellence in education that shapes the future of our students," said Dr. Louis Muglia, President and CEO, Burroughs Wellcome Fund. "The unwavering passion and innovative leadership of the honoree and their colleagues in school districts across North Carolina inspires us all to strive for a brighter tomorrow in our state's public schools."

The 2026 North Carolina Regional Superintendents of the Year, all of whom were nominees for this prestigious state award, were also recognized as such at the Oct. 9 ceremony, thanks to the sponsorship of Scholastic Education:

- **Region 1 | Northeast | Dr. Otis Smallwood, Bertie County Public Schools**
- **Region 2 | Southeast | Dr. Matthew Cheeseman, Beaufort County Schools**
- **Region 3 | Central | Dr. Rodney Peterson, Person County Schools**
- **Region 4 | Sandhills | Dr. Tim Locklair, Moore County Schools**
- **Region 5 | Piedmont-Triad | Dr. Brad Rice, Stokes County Schools**
- **Region 6 | Southwest | Dr. Andrew Houlihan, Union County Public Schools**
- **Region 7 | Northwest | Dr. Eisa Cox, Ashe County Schools**
- **Region 8 | Western | Mrs. Kathy Amos, Yancey County Schools**

ABOUT US

NCASA is a non-profit membership organization serving over 8,000 school administrators from across North Carolina and uniting 12 educational leadership groups with the common mission of ensuring student success through visionary leadership. www.ncasa.net

NCSSA, a core affiliate of NCASA, is the membership and professional development organization for superintendents from North Carolina's 115 public school districts. www.ncssa.net

Burroughs Wellcome Fund is a private foundation dedicated to advancing biomedical sciences and supporting the next generation of scientific researchers and educators. With a strong commitment to fostering innovation and excellence in science, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund has made a significant investment in the North Carolina educational landscape. www.bwfund.org

Scholastic Education helps educators create effective literacy and learning experiences and welcoming classrooms through rich stories and meaningful instructional tools. Grounded in research and shaped by deep partnerships with practitioners and thought leaders, our supplemental literacy solutions reinforce core instruction while cultivating a culture of literacy where all children feel motivated, confident, and capable. www.scholastic.com/education

PICTURES & CAPTIONS:



Photo courtesy of Alexis Hawk, NC Association of School Administrators

(Left to right) Katherine Joyce, NCASA Executive Director; Alfred Mayes, Burroughs Wellcome Fund; Dr. Rodney Peterson, Superintendent of Person County Schools; Dr. Sam Houston, Jr., President and CEO of the North Carolina Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education Center; and Jack Hoke, NCSSA Executive Director, pose in a group photo following the announcement of Peterson as the Burroughs Wellcome Fund 2026 A. Craig Phillips, NC Superintendent of the Year at a ceremony held in Greensboro, Oct. 9.



Photo courtesy of Alexis Hawk, NC Association of School Administrators

Dr. Rodney Peterson, Superintendent of Person County Schools, gives a short speech after he wins the award of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund 2026 A. Craig Phillips NC Superintendent of the Year, at a ceremony held in Greensboro, Oct. 9.