



Rural Education Institute presents:
2026 North Carolina Educators Wales
Delegation

February 21-28 2026





*“Now behind the eyes and secrets of the dreamers in the streets
rocked to sleep by the sea, see the titbits and topsyturvies, bobs and
buttontops, bags and bones, ash and rind and dandruff and
nailparings, saliva and snowflakes and moulted feathers of dreams,
the wrecks and sprats and shells and fishbones, whale-juice and
moonshine and small salt fry dished up by the hidden sea.”*

— Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood*

East Carolina University

College of Education

Department of Educational Leadership & Foundations

Rural Education Institute

Eastern North Carolina Schools

Sampson

Pitt

Washington

Hertford

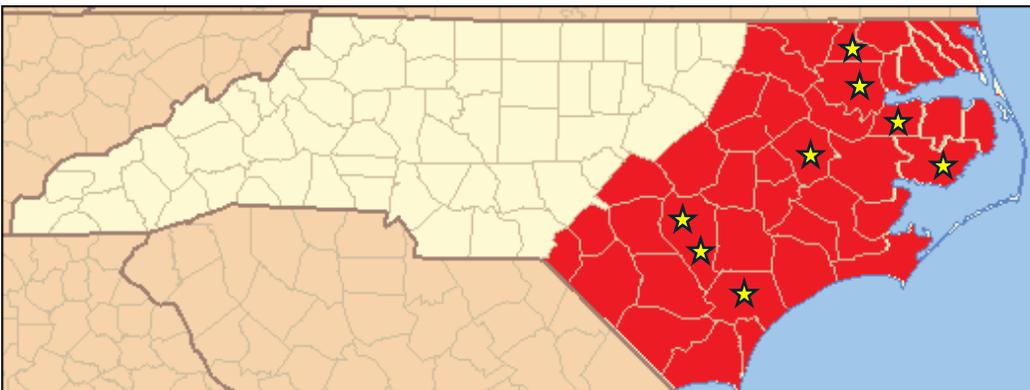
Hyde

Pender

Bertie

Clinton City

University of Central Florida Center for Community Schools





Future focused. Innovation driven.

East Carolina University® remains steadfast in our commitment to be a national model for student success, public service and regional transformation. Through education, research, health care, community engagement, cultural enrichment and more, ECU enhances the quality of life for our students, our state and our world.

Future focused. Innovation driven. is ECU's strategic plan for 2023–2028. A refresh of the university's 2017–2022 strategic plan, it highlights the intersection of ECU's mission, vision and values as we set priorities for advancing the university during the next five years.

The Strategic Planning Committee and the Strategic Advisory Committee have offered leadership, expertise and a collaborative approach to the strategic planning process. Stakeholder input – shared through public forums, online surveys and Chancellor Philip Rogers' Pirate™ Perspectives listening sessions – has been crucial as well.

The refreshed plan sustains a focus on areas vitally important to the core of ECU's mission while sharing insight into what we aspire to be.

<https://www.ecu.edu/>



Welcome to the ECU College of Education

The College of Education is North Carolina's largest producer of educators, preparing teachers, school leaders, counselors, and other professionals through nationally recognized undergraduate and graduate programs. The college houses key centers and institutes—including the ECU Community School, McClammy Counseling and Research Laboratory, Irene Howell Assistive Technology Center, Center for STEM Education, and the Rural Education Institute—that drive innovation and address the unique educational needs of Eastern North Carolina and beyond.

Nationally Ranked Programs

ECU College of Education earned an A+ rating in Elementary Reading and Mathematics from the National Council on Teacher Quality and ranked 54th out of 313 in U.S. News & World Report's 2024–25 Best Online Programs, placing it in the top 20% nationally.

Educators in Action

Over 13,000 ECU-trained educators are employed in North Carolina public schools. ECU educator preparation program completers are employed in 2,276 schools across 115 districts in North Carolina.

Funding Student Success

The College of Education awarded \$1.2 million in scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students for the 2025–2026 academic year, supporting both full- and part-time, campus-based and distance learners.

Expanding Research Impact

One-third of College of Education faculty are engaged in grant-funded research, contributing to a positive trajectory in external funding and advancing community-focused projects that support ECU's R1 designation and create meaningful impact across eastern North Carolina.

Empowering Student Service

College of Education students complete over 5,000 hours of community service each year through program-led initiatives, gaining meaningful insight into the real-world experiences of students and families across eastern North Carolina.

Practice-Based Preparation

Each year, over 1,000 ECU pre-service teacher candidates complete field experiences and internships across North Carolina, supported by the 43-district Latham Clinical Schools Network and partnerships with more than 90 districts statewide.

<https://education.ecu.edu/>

Department of Educational Leadership & Foundations

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP & FOUNDATIONS

"Empowering educators to become scholar-practitioners and leaders who drive critical discourse, inspire innovation, and foster excellence for all."

About Our Program

The Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at ECU empowers educators to transform systems through critical inquiry and practical application. We cultivate the knowledge and mindsets needed to lead across diverse institutional settings. Our curriculum is designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, preparing administrators for the complexities of modern educational leadership.



Departmental Quick Facts

- **National Accreditation Excellence**
NC's only Master of School Administration to hold NCATE status.
- **Carnegie Project (CPED) Membership**
Meeting the highest national standards for practitioner-focused research.
- **World-Class International EdD**
A premier 3-year degree program designed for global impact:
 - **Program:** Online Fall/Spring courses with an annual in-person summer learning exchange in **Bangkok, Thailand** (June).
 - **Dissertation:** Job-embedded participatory action research supported by a lead research advisor and collaborative team throughout the process.



GRANT LEADERSHIP

\$16M+

The state-leading model for the NC Principal Fellows program, securing significant funding to drive regional excellence.

STATEWIDE IMPACT

#1 Producer

Recognized as the largest producer of EdDs in K-12 and Higher Education across North Carolina.

ECU

Connect with Leadership
College of Education
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GO PIRATES!

Rural Education Institute

REI Mission and Goals

Mission

The mission of the ECU COE's REI is to initiate and facilitate partnerships and research-driven innovations that enhance holistic development and opportunities for PK-16 students and their families in rural communities, and to collaborate with stakeholders towards positive transformation in families and schools.

Goals

1. **Next Gen:** We **grow** the next generation of rural educators and researchers.
2. **Local and Regional Development:** We **collaborate** to build capacity for all.
3. **Rural Education Promotion:** We **articulate** and **advocate** for the importance of rural schools and communities.
4. **Research and Evaluation:** We **study** practice and **investigate** what works in rural schools.

<https://education.ecu.edu/rei/>



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL FLORIDA

UCF Center for Community Schools

Every Child Deserves a Thriving School Community

At the UCF Center for Community Schools, we believe in a world where every student has access to education that nurtures success and well-being. We're dedicated to creating environments where children can flourish in all aspects of their lives through our comprehensive community school models.

Why Choose a Community School Approach?

Community schools activate student and educator potential, integrate family engagement, and transform communities through:

- **Providing Opportunities:** Fostering an environment where every student thrives and academically achieves.
- **Community Collaboration:** Strengthening connections between schools, families, and local organizations to support student success.
- **Holistic Focus on Students:** Considering more than just academics to support the holistic well-being of students.

What We Do

The center provides the following services:

- **Continuous Assessment and Evaluation:** Utilizing data-driven strategies to inform decision-making and drive ongoing improvement.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Champion initiatives that bring together various stakeholders to promote learning environments that support improved student outcomes.

<https://ccie.ucf.edu/communityschools/>

DELEGATION ITINERARY

- Saturday (Feb. 21) Depart NC @ 8:50pm
- Sunday (Feb. 22) Arrive London @ 9:20am
Train to Cardiff
1:30pm Hotel Check In
3pm Welcome Meeting @ Hotel ([Hilton Cardiff](#))
Dinner on Your Own
- Monday (Feb. 23) Cardiff
AM [Hotel Meeting Room]
~Short introduction on the history and heritage of Wales: Edward Jones
~British Council presentation: Their input to developing Community Focused Schools in Wales: Tanya Ramone
~Teacher enquiry: Richard Jones
Lunch on Your Own
PM
~Welsh Government Meeting
Delegate Dinner (Sponsored by UCF Center for Community Schools)
- Tuesday (Feb. 24) Swansea
AM [Bus to Swansea]
~Ysgol Pen Rhos, Llanelli
~Clwyd Primary School
PM
~Swansea University Visit (Tom Avery)
~Travel back to Cardiff
Dinner on Your Own
- Wednesday (Feb. 25) Wrexham
AM [Bus to Wrexham]
~Ysgol Clywedog (Simon Ellis)
PM
~Wrexham University
~Free Time in Wrexham
Dinner on Your Own in Cardiff
- Thursday (Feb. 26) Pencoed/Newport
AM [Bus to Pencoed]
~Pencoed & Maindee School Visit
~Travel back to Cardiff
6:30-9:30pm Cardiff Castle Tour & Meeting
Dinner at the Castle with community partners
(Sponsored by COE ELF Department)

Friday (Feb. 27) NC Delegate Planning Meeting
 9:30am Debrief Session (Hotel Meeting Room)
 Objectives for June 6 REI Leadership Exchange
 2:18pm Train to London
 London Hotel ([Hilton Garden Inn Airport](#))
 Dinner on Your Own

Saturday (Feb. 28) Depart London @ 1:40pm | Arrive NC @ 5:35pm

DELEGATION BIOS



Dr Suzanne Sarjeant is an experienced education leader and policy advisor who has played a pivotal role in shaping inclusive, community-based learning across Wales. As a **Professional Advisor to the Welsh Government**, she led the development of the Community Focused Schools policy, fostering cross-sector collaboration and embedding equity into national education reform. She has cultivated strong international partnerships and has shared Wales' innovative educational practices on a global stage.

Suzanne currently serves as **Headteacher of Pencoed Primary School**, where she leads the strategic direction and day-to-day management of a thriving and ambitious learning community. Her leadership is grounded in a strong commitment to inclusive and equitable education.

A passionate advocate for the future of the profession, Suzanne plays an active role in developing teachers and leaders. Through a formal partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University, she contributes to the delivery of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes, shaping the next generation of educators across Wales.

Her work reflects a lifelong commitment to ensuring that learning extends beyond the classroom to empower children, families, and communities. She holds a **Doctor of Education (EdD)**, a **Master's in Education in Early Childhood Education**, and the **National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)**, grounding her leadership in deep academic and professional expertise.



Matthew Militello is the Wells Fargo Distinguished Professor in Educational Leadership at East Carolina University. He has held faculty positions at North Carolina State University and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Prior to his academic career, Militello was a middle and high public school teacher, assistant principal, and principal in Michigan. Militello has more than 60 publications, including his 7th book *Leading and learning together: Cultivating school change from within* (2025, Teachers College Press). Militello has received more than \$22 million in external funding. Militello is the founding

director of an executive Ed.D. program hosted each summer in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2023, he was awarded the ECU Eminent Career Trend Setter Award. He earned his undergraduate teaching degree from the University of Michigan and his masters and Ph.D. in Educational Administration from Michigan State University. Matt has been married to Elizabeth for 31 years and is the father of four wonderful boys.

Matt works in K-12 settings to connect schools and communities. He does so by utilizing a framework and protocols called Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs). This work is grounded in valuing indigenous ways of knowing, storytelling, and an asset-based approach to building community. School and district leaders are well-positioned to lead efforts to engage all members of their communities. When school leaders learn the often-hidden stories of their communities, they not only give voice to those who have been marginalized but also demonstrate a commitment to authentic community engagement. Militello works with school and district leaders to facilitate the *wisdom of people* and *power of place* with the teachers, families, community leaders, and students they serve.

References

- Tredway, L., **Militello, M.**, & Flessa, J. (2025). *Leading and learning together: Cultivating school change from within*. Teachers College Press.
- Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., & **Militello, M.** (2016). *Reframing community partnerships in education: Uniting the power of place and wisdom of people*. Routledge.

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Jerry Johnson is the Phoebe Moore Dail Distinguished Professor in Rural Education and Director of the Rural Education Institute in the College of Education at East Carolina University. A former high school English teacher and principal, Johnson has taught in educational leadership programs for nearly two decades and served from 2003-2008 as policy research director for the Rural School and Community Trust, a national non-profit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities. The 2017 recipient of the Stanley A. Brzezinski Memorial Rural Education Research Award from the National Rural Education Association, he is the author of more than 70 publications on rural education policy, school-based leadership, and place-based learning. Johnson has testified before state legislatures and presented research briefings on Capitol Hill, and his research has been cited in state school finance litigation/legislation and contributed to the development of state policies and regulations governing teacher and leader preparation. In addition to his work in the U.S., Johnson consults regularly with universities and ministries of education in the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe on rural development and higher education reform initiatives.

Current leadership roles in professional organizations include serving as Executive Board Member for the National Rural Education Association, Associate Editor of the *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, Advisory Board Member for the UCF Center for Community Schools, and Advisory Board member for the Nigeria-based Marben Foundation.

Jerry works in rural schools and communities to promote and support democratic agency among students, families, educators, and community members—particularly those who have historically been excluded from decision-making and direction-setting. He does this by engaging individuals and groups who reflect their community and working with them to build systems and structures that ensure access and build capacity for active participation.

References

Johnson, J., & Harmon, H. (2025). *Handbook on rural and remote education*. Edward Elgar.

Harmon, H., & Johnson, J. (2024). Leading schools in rural communities: In search of collaborative leadership. In S. White & J. Downey (Eds). *Sharing leadership stories in rural education: Leading rurally across Australia and the United States*. Springer.

Gott, T., Johnson, J., & Tolar, M. (2023). *Civic education as a transformative form of educational practice and engagement*. In T. Hoggan-Kloubert, P.E. Mabrey, & C. Hoggan (Eds.). *Transformative civic education in democratic societies*. Michigan State University Press.

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Dr. Loni Crumb is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor, National Certified Counselor, and CEO of Carolina Cares Counseling & Consulting, PLLC. She serves as an Associate Professor in the Counselor Education Program at East Carolina University, where her work centers on community-engaged scholarship. Dr. Crumb is internationally recognized for her work with rural and underserved communities. Her scholarly and professional interests include P–16 rural education, behavioral and mental health, workforce development, and social justice–oriented and multicultural training. Her expertise has informed discussions on mental health and education across the United States and internationally, including in Belize, Canada, Greece, Italy, Nigeria, and Turkey.

Through sustained school–university–community partnerships, Dr. Crumb has secured significant funding through grants, contracts, and philanthropic gifts to advance mental health services and educational access for underserved populations. She serves on the National Rural Education Association’s Rural Research Advisory Committee and has been recognized for her scholarly innovation and global engagement (Research Innovations in Counseling Practice and Counselor Education Award, National Board of Certified Counselors, 2024–2025; Trendsetter Award, Office of Research, Economic Development, and Engagement, East Carolina University, 2024–2025; Achievement in International Service and Engagement Award, East Carolina University Office of Global Affairs, 2024–2025; Mandela Washington Fellowship Reciprocal Exchange Honoree, U.S. Department of State, 2024).

Dr. Crumb earned her Ph.D. in Counseling and Student Personnel Services from the University of Georgia, an M.A. in Education and Community Counseling from Clark Atlanta University, and a B.A. in Psychology from North Carolina State University.

References

Crumb, L., Chambers, C., Azano, A., Hands, A., Cuthrell, K. & Avent, M. (2023). Rural cultural wealth: Dismantling deficit ideologies of rurality. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 17(2), 125-138. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-06-2022-007>

Avent Harris, J., Dietz, S., & Crumb, L. (2019). Relational Cultural Theory: A guiding framework for study abroad experiences. *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling*, 1(2), 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.7290/tsc010208>

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Janeé R. Avent Harris, PhD, LCMHCA, NCC is a nationally and internationally recognized educator, administrator, researcher, and clinician whose work sits at the intersection of mental health, education, spirituality, and community engagement. She currently serves as Associate Dean for Faculty, Staff, & Student Success in the College of Education at East Carolina University, where she provides strategic leadership for faculty and staff development, wellness initiatives, personnel processes, global engagement, and institutional collaboration.

Dr. Avent Harris brings more than a decade of experience in higher education, having served in multiple administrative roles including Interim Department Chair, Assistant Dean for Community Engagement and Wellness, and Graduate Program Director for a CACREP-accredited counselor education program. Across these roles, she has led strategic planning, faculty recruitment and advancement, accreditation compliance, student success initiatives, and large-scale organizational change. Her leadership is grounded in a commitment to cultivating cultures of care, belonging, accountability, and excellence within academic institutions.

As a scholar and counselor educator, Dr. Avent Harris has an extensive record of peer-reviewed publications, funded research, and invited presentations. Her scholarship primarily focuses on the integration of spirituality and religion in counseling, community engagement, and wellness in academia. Her work has been published in leading journals and supported by federal, foundation, and institutional funding. She is also a co-author of an upcoming peer-reviewed book and the author of a wellness-focused workbook used in community and clinical settings.

Dr. Avent Harris is an experienced **licensed clinical mental health counselor associate and clinical supervisor**, with prior clinical practice in university counseling centers, medical settings, and community clinics. Her clinical expertise includes crisis intervention, supervision of counselors-in-training, and trauma-informed care. She regularly bridges research, teaching, and practice to ensure that counselor preparation and mental health services are ethically grounded and community-informed.

Nationally, Dr. Avent Harris is deeply engaged in professional service and leadership. She currently serves as Past President of the Association for Spiritual, Religious, and Ethical Values in Counseling (ASERVIC), a division of the American Counseling Association, where she provides thought leadership on ethics, spirituality, and counselor education. She has served on editorial boards, national task forces, advisory panels, and conference leadership teams, and her expertise is frequently sought for keynote addresses, policy discussions, and consultation.

Through her combined work as an educator, administrator, researcher, and clinician, Dr. Avent Harris is widely recognized for advancing collaborative leadership, strengthening mental health systems, mentoring emerging professionals, and translating scholarship into meaningful institutional and community impact.

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Christopher J. Rivera, PhD., is a Professor and the Interim Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations (ELF) at East Carolina University (ECU). With over 20 years of experience as an educator and administrator, Dr. Rivera is a recognized leader in the field of special education. In addition to his departmental leadership, he serves as the Regional Director for the ECU North Carolina New Teacher Support Program (NC NTSP), where he oversees instructional coaching and professional

development for beginning teachers across the region.

He earned his PhD in Special Education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His professional background is rooted in the classroom, having served as an Exceptional Children's teacher for students with moderate to severe disabilities. This foundational experience continues to inform his high-level administrative work and his commitment to teacher induction and retention.

As an administrator at ECU, Dr. Rivera has held several pivotal roles. His leadership as Chair of the ELF department has involved developing new programs, mentoring faculty, fostering interdisciplinary and community relationships, and ensuring the college's mission of regional transformation.

Dr. Rivera is a well known scholar whose research focuses on improving academic and postsecondary outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students with extensive support needs. His work frequently explores the intersection of race, ethnicity, and disability, with a specific emphasis on emergent literacy and the use of multimedia shared stories and assistive technology to bridge educational gaps. He has authored or co-authored numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and creative works, and has secured external and internal grant funding to support his research and program initiatives.

His excellence in the classroom has been recognized through numerous honors, including the ECU Scholar-Teacher Award, the Profiles in Diversity Award, and the Honored Instructor Award. Dr. Rivera's teaching philosophy is grounded in adult learning theory and the co-construction of class norms, striving to create "gracious spaces" where students can balance academic rigor with meaningful professional growth.

Beyond his institutional service, Dr. Rivera is deeply involved in the broader professional community. He serves on the editorial boards of several prestigious journals, including *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* and *Intervention in School and Clinic*. He is also a principal member of the Institute of Education Sciences special education peer review panel.

When Dr. Rivera is not teaching or supporting students, families, and colleagues, he can be found spending quality time with his family or fishing from his kayak with friends in the coastal waters of North Carolina.

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Amy Ellis, Ed.D.

Director, UCF Center for Community Schools

Visionary Leader, Systems Builder, Community School Expert

Dr. Amy Ellis is a trailblazer in creating systems of access and holistic support for students as the Director of the Center for Community Schools at the University of Central Florida's College of Community Innovation and Education. Dr. Ellis has set paths toward transformation, elevating underrepresented voices and pioneering scale-up strategies that redefine educational systems.

Dr. Ellis's journey began in Central Florida's juvenile justice centers, where she worked to support vulnerable youth struggling with substance use disorders. This early experience laid the foundation for her passion for creating accessible educational opportunities for all students. In 2000, Dr. Ellis transitioned to supporting district family and inter-agency community school efforts, where she played a pivotal role as a district SAFE coordinator in one of the largest school districts in the United States.

In 2010, Dr. Ellis embarked on a new chapter in her career as the first Senior Administrator at Evans High School, where she spearheaded the school's transformation into Florida's first Community Partnership School. Over the years, she has led the expansion of this initiative from a single-building concept to a statewide endeavor encompassing 50 sites across 23 districts, serving 50,000+ students with a \$20.1 million budget recurring allocation by the Florida legislature. In 2023, Dr. Ellis led the team that secured a \$50 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education—one of just five nationwide—to scale university assisted community schools in Florida. Over her career, Dr. Ellis has secured over \$137 million in grants to advance educational systems and outcomes for students.

To ensure the quality and fidelity of Community Partnership Schools statewide, Dr. Ellis implemented a multifaceted approach that includes quality standards rooted in research, provided ongoing guidance and support for implementation, and established a comprehensive assessment and evaluation system. This commitment to excellence has not only led to the success of the initiative but has also garnered recognition from educational leaders at local, state, national, and international levels. In 2018, the UCF Center for Community Schools was named as the international hub for community school advancement by the U.K.'s International Centre of Excellence for Community Schools (ICECS).

The phrase “We are one” is the backbone of Dr. Ellis’s efforts, acknowledging that as she strengthens and grows supports for all, the next generation will rise. With a steadfast commitment to education, Dr. Ellis continues to shape the future of learning, ensuring that every child—regardless of background or life circumstance—has the opportunity to thrive.

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Heather McClellan, MPA

Assistant Director, UCF Center for Community Schools

Heather McClellan, MPA is an Assistant Director at the University of Central Florida’s Center for Community Schools, where her work focuses on the business, administrative, and operational systems of the Center. She provides strategic leadership for the design, implementation, and evaluation of community school initiatives across Florida, supporting more than 60 sites serving over 45,000 students. Her work emphasizes capacity building, collaborative leadership, and the design and management of operational structures and systems that support sustainable school–community

partnerships.

McClellan’s scholarship and applied research interests center on community schools, cross-sector governance, university–community partnerships, and professional learning systems that strengthen educational access and student outcomes. She has played a key role in the conceptualization and development of large-scale federal and state initiatives, including a \$50 million U.S. Department of Education grant to establish a statewide University-Assisted Community Schools network in Florida, as well as the securing and stewardship of recurring state legislative funding that has grown from \$7 million to \$20 million during her tenure at the Center. Her work bridges research, policy, and practice, with a focus on systems development, grant implementation, continuous improvement, and long-term sustainability.

Previously, McClellan served as Assistant Director in the UCF College of Medicine, where she led the development of educational pipeline and mentorship programs designed to expand access to medical and health professions. Earlier roles at UCF included leadership in community partnerships, downtown campus engagement, and the statewide expansion of the Community Partnership Schools™ model. McClellan has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in Volunteerism in Nonprofit Management and Cross-Sectoral Governance in UCF’s School of Public Administration, contributing to the professional preparation of students pursuing careers in public service and nonprofit leadership. She has served in multiple advisory and cabinet roles at the university and regional levels and is a published contributor to research and field advancement on university partnerships in community schools. She holds a Master of Public Administration and a graduate certificate in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Central Florida.

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Missy Glavey, Ph.D.

Assistant Director, Unlimited Potential Initiative | UCF Center for Community Schools

Dr. Missy Glavey is an Assistant Director at the University of Central Florida's Center for Community Schools, where she leads the statewide coordination of the *Unlimited Potential Initiative*, a \$50 million, U.S. Department of Education–funded Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) state-scaling grant. In this role, Dr. Glavey supports a multi-university, multi-district partnership spanning Florida, working alongside four universities and five school districts to expand and strengthen University-

Assisted Community Schools in high-need communities across the state.

Dr. Glavey's work is grounded in both practice and research. Her career began in K–12 education as a paraprofessional and special education teacher, supporting students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings. These early experiences shaped her commitment to equity, access, and community-embedded approaches to education--values that continue to guide her leadership today.

As Assistant Director, Dr. Glavey facilitates cross-sector collaboration among university partners, school districts, and community organizations. She oversees aligned implementation across regions and provides strategic oversight of technical assistance and evaluation efforts to ensure university-to-school pipeline services are responsive, sustainable, and data-informed. Her work emphasizes building institutional capacity within universities to support schools, rather than short-term, site-level interventions.

In addition to her leadership role, Dr. Glavey is a scholar and educator. She serves as an Adjunct Professor at the University of North Florida and has previously held faculty appointments at the University of South Florida and Western Carolina University. Her teaching and research focus on inclusive education, disability services, behavior support, reading intervention, teacher preparation, and postsecondary transition for students with disabilities. She holds a Florida Professional K–12 Teaching Certificate in Elementary and Special Education, with endorsements in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Reading. She has published peer-reviewed research on topics including socially assistive robotics for students with ASD, community-embedded teacher preparation, and inclusive postsecondary education, and regularly presents at national and international conferences.

Across all aspects of her work, Dr. Glavey is committed to advancing inclusive, community-informed educational systems that honor local context while building scalable, sustainable infrastructure. Her leadership reflects a belief that meaningful change occurs at the intersection of relationships, data, and shared responsibility—and that universities play a critical role in strengthening the communities they serve.

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Dr. Brad Breedlove
Superintendent, Pender County Schools

Dr. Brad Breedlove serves as the Superintendent of Pender County Schools, a rapidly growing district in southeastern North Carolina comprising 19 schools, over 11,000 students, and nearly 1,300 employees. Since assuming the role in January 2023, Dr. Breedlove has championed a philosophy of continuous improvement, successfully steering the district to new heights in academic achievement, career readiness, and operational efficiency.

Under his leadership, Pender County Schools has garnered significant statewide recognition. In 2025, the district was honored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for exceptional academic growth and graduation rates. Dr. Breedlove has also prioritized workforce development, leading the district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program to a Top-10 state ranking for credential attainment in 2024. His strategic oversight of the district's \$140 million budget reflects a keen focus on maximizing resources to support student outcomes, facility modernization, and equitable access to technology.

Prior to his superintendency, Dr. Breedlove built a distinguished career in Union County Public Schools, where he served as Chief Academic Officer and Director of School Performance, Principal, and Teacher. His excellence in school leadership was recognized on a state level when he was named the North Carolina High School Principal of the Year in 2014. This accolade followed his tenure as Principal of Monroe High School and Weddington High School, where he was celebrated for closing achievement gaps and fostering inclusive school cultures.

Dr. Breedlove's path to education was unconventional, providing him with a unique perspective on teamwork and performance. As an athlete, he played football as a wide receiver and kick return specialist at Duke University from 1989-1993, where he remains one of the program's historic wide receivers, followed by a professional stint in the Canadian Football League (CFL). Before entering education, he worked for JBB Brokerage at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange in Eurodollars Options, an experience that grounds his approach to district fiscal management and strategic planning. Dr. Breedlove holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from High Point University (2017), as well as Master's degree from DePaul University. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in History from Duke University.

Active in his community and profession, he serves on the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) Community Advisory Council and is a member of the local Rotary Club.

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Dr. Steve M. Lassiter Jr., Superintendent, Pitt County Schools

Dr. Steve M. Lassiter Jr. serves as the Superintendent of Pitt County Schools, the 13th largest school district in North Carolina, which supports over 24,000 students and employs more than 3,000 staff members. A native of Edenton, North Carolina, Dr. Lassiter currently resides in Greenville and has dedicated his career to educational

leadership and student success across the region.

Dr. Lassiter's career in education began in the classroom as an elementary school teacher with Pitt County Schools. He transitioned into administration first as an assistant principal, followed by his first principalship at Edna Andrews Elementary School in Martin County. He later returned to Pitt County to lead Pactolus School as principal. Before assuming the superintendency, Dr. Lassiter held several senior leadership roles, including Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources & Auxiliary Services for Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools, as well as Assistant Superintendent of Educational Programs and Services and Deputy Superintendent with Pitt County Schools.

A distinguished leader in his field, Dr. Lassiter was named the Wells Fargo North Carolina Principal of the Year in 2015. His other accolades include being named a 2008 finalist for the Pitt County Schools Wachovia Teacher of the Year and receiving the Latham Award for Excellence in Teaching at East Carolina University. He is also a former North Carolina Principal Fellow and serves on the boards of various organizations throughout the state.

Dr. Lassiter holds a Doctor of Education degree from North Carolina State University. He earned both his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and his Master of School Administration from East Carolina University. In addition to his administrative work, he has contributed to the academic field as the co-author of the article "*Doing More With Less: How to Maintain the Integrity of Beginning Teacher Support Programs*," published in the *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*.

Outside of his professional responsibilities, Dr. Lassiter enjoys traveling, cooking, and giving back to his community through service.

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Dr. Wesley Scott Johnson
Superintendent, Clinton City Schools

Dr. Wesley Scott Johnson serves as Superintendent of Clinton City Schools in Sampson County, North Carolina. Clinton City Schools serves approximately 3,100 students and employs more than 450 staff members.

A native of Harnett County, North Carolina, Dr. Johnson currently resides in Clinton with his wife and three daughters.

Dr. Johnson began his career in education nearly 28 years ago as a high school mathematics teacher in Sampson County Schools before transitioning to his primary field of physical education, where he also served as a coach. In 2003, he was appointed to his first administrative role as assistant principal at Hobbton Middle School and was named principal the following year. After two years at Hobbton Middle School, Dr. Johnson moved to Hobbton High School, where he served for seven years and led the school through significant academic growth and increased student proficiency.

Dr. Johnson later served more than five years in the central office of Sampson County Schools, first as Director of Digital Literacy, Accountability, and Technology, and subsequently as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. In September 2018, he was appointed Superintendent of Clinton City Schools, a role in which he continues to serve with pride and commitment to his community.

A respected leader in public education, Dr. Johnson was named Southeast Regional Principal of the Year and a finalist for North Carolina Principal of the Year in 2013. In 2023, he was selected as Southeast Regional Superintendent of the Year and a finalist for North Carolina Superintendent of the Year. He currently serves as Superintendent Chair for the Southeastern Educational Alliance (SEA) Regional Education Service Alliance (RESA) and has been a member of the North Carolina School Superintendents' Association Executive Board since 2021.

Dr. Johnson is also actively engaged in community leadership, currently serving as President of the United Way of Sampson County and Chair of the Sampson County YMCA Advisory Board. He previously served as President of the Rotary Club of Clinton-Sampson.

Dr. Johnson earned a Doctor of Education degree from East Carolina University in 2010. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education (1998), a Master of Education in Physical Education (2002), and a Master of School Administration (2003) from Campbell University.

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Dr. Jesse J. Pratt, Superintendent
Hertford County Public Schools

Dr. Jesse J. Pratt has served as Superintendent of Hertford County Public Schools since January 2023, bringing nearly 30 years of experience in public education across North Carolina and Indiana. A proven instructional and systems leader, Dr. Pratt brings strong instructional leadership and a disciplined, data-driven approach to decision-making that supports continuous improvement. He has extensive experience leading district and school-level turnaround efforts, aligning systems and structures to improve academic performance, strengthen organizational effectiveness, and ensure

accountability at every level.

Under his leadership, Hertford County Public Schools exited low-performing district status in 2024, supported by significant gains in Math I, Math III, Biology, and English II; increased graduation rates; reduced dropout rates; and decreased chronic absenteeism. Dr. Pratt's strategic leadership emphasizes thoughtful planning and systems alignment, ensuring that district initiatives remain focused, coherent, and sustainable. He is deeply committed to developing talent through intentional leadership pipelines and professional learning that build instructional capacity and empower educators to lead with purpose and impact.

Throughout his career, Dr. Pratt has prioritized community engagement and partnership-building as essential to student success. He has cultivated strong relationships with families, higher education institutions, and community stakeholders to expand opportunities and resources for students. His work is guided by the district's strategic plan, *Pursuit of Excellence: Unleashing Our Potential*, with a continued focus on early literacy, numeracy, equity, and positive social outcomes for students.

Dr. Pratt previously served as Deputy Superintendent of Schools and Deputy Superintendent of Operations for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, as well as Assistant Superintendent in Thomasville City Schools and Regional Superintendent in Indianapolis Public Schools. He began his career as a teacher and principal in Guilford County Schools (GCS), where he led one of the most challenging high schools in GCS to notable academic success.

Dr. Pratt holds a bachelor's degree in middle school education, a master's degree in school administration, and an educational specialist degree from Appalachian State University, as well as a doctorate in educational leadership from High Point University. He remains committed to collaborating with staff, students, families, and the community to ensure success for all learners.

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Dr. Otis L. Smallwood was named Superintendent of Bertie County Schools in July, 2019 and the only Bertie County native to ever hold the permanent position of Superintendent of Schools. Smallwood was reared in the Indian Woods Community of Windsor and attended West Bertie Elementary School and graduated from Bertie High School in 1989.

Prior to his appointment as superintendent, he served 11 years in the Jones County School System as an Executive Director of Human Resources & Accountability, and Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources/Operations/IT. Smallwood is a former middle and high school math teacher and school administrator. Smallwood completed his student teaching

at Northeastern High School here in Elizabeth City under the direction of former mayor, Ms. Bettie Parker.

He earned his Doctor of Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University (2015), a Masters in School Administration from East Carolina University (2001), and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics & Secondary Education from Elizabeth City State University (1993). Dr. Smallwood completed the Principal's Executive Program (Developing Future Leaders) at UNC Chapel Hill (2000).

Throughout his 32 year career, Dr. Smallwood has often been recognized for his achievements and leadership.

Most recently he was selected as the 2025-26 NE Regional Superintendent of the Year. He was also awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine in June 2025: the highest civilian honor that's awarded by the Governor.

Dr. Smallwood sits on several Boards in the region. A few of those are ECU Health/Bertie Advisory Board, ECU College of Education Advisory Board, Project Oversight for Destination Bertie. In addition, he was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Roanoke Chowan Community College in 2020 by Governor Roy Cooper and reappointed to another 4-year term in 2024 by Senator Phil Berger.

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Dr. Melanie R. Shaver serves as Superintendent of Hyde County Schools, where she is recognized as a proactive, innovative educational leader with a strong focus on student success, teacher development, and community partnerships. Grounded in a deep passion for rural education, Dr. Shaver believes that zip codes should not determine destinies and that where a student lives should never limit how far they can go. During her tenure, she has led efforts to open schools, expand choice for students and families, stabilize infrastructure, increase enrollment, and improve student performance, while navigating the unique challenges of a rural district with limited resources. Her leadership emphasizes collaboration with families, local government, business and industry partners, and state agencies to strengthen educational opportunities and expand access for all students in Hyde County.

In 2025, Dr. Shaver was selected as the recipient of the North Carolina School Superintendents' Association Dr. Dwayne Stallings Leadership Award, presented to a superintendent in northeast North Carolina who exemplifies dedication to public education, academic excellence, and continual professional growth. The award, named in honor of the late Dr. Dwayne Stallings, recognizes innovative leadership that advances student learning and strengthens collaboration among school districts and regional partners through the Northeast Regional Education Service Alliance. In announcing the award, NCSSA Executive Director Jack Hoke cited Dr. Shaver's strong commitment to public education, her focus on professional growth, and her positive impact on student learning outcomes in Hyde County Schools.

Prior to serving as superintendent, Dr. Shaver built a distinguished career as a teacher, instructional coach, principal, and district leader. She has been recognized as both Teacher of the Year and Principal of the Year in McDowell County and received the Distinguished Service Award for Administration and Supervision. She was selected for the Phi Delta Kappa Emerging Leaders Program, the North Carolina Leadership in Personalized and Digital Learning Program, and to serve on the Smithsonian Education Center International Faculty for Strategic Planning. She also received state and national recognition for writing and implementing an internationally award-winning STEM middle school program.

Dr. Shaver holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Gardner Webb University, a Master of Science in Science Education and a Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction from East Carolina University, a Bachelor's degree in Middle Grades Education from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, and an Associate degree in Fish and Wildlife Management from Haywood Community College. She, her husband, and her daughter are proud to call Hyde County home.

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Dr. Jamie Shaun King
Superintendent, Sampson County Schools

Dr. Jamie Shaun King serves as Superintendent of Sampson County Schools in southeastern North Carolina, a rural public school district comprising 18 schools, approximately 8,000 students, and more than 1,000 employees. In this role, Dr. King provides strategic leadership focused on improving student outcomes, strengthening organizational effectiveness, and advancing partnerships that support schools and communities.

Dr. King brings over two decades of experience in public education, spanning classroom teaching, school administration, and district-level executive leadership. Since assuming the superintendency in 2023, he has led significant systems-level initiatives, including securing more than \$80 million in new funding—highlighted by \$62 million for the construction of a new high school—launching community schools and workforce-aligned instructional programs, and guiding the district’s strategic response to a Cognia Accreditation Engagement Review. His leadership emphasizes data-informed decision-making, equity-focused resource allocation, and organizational accountability.

Prior to his current role, Dr. King served as Regional Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent in Guilford County Schools, where he supervised multiple schools, directed large-scale curriculum implementation, managed multimillion-dollar grants, and supported districtwide professional learning. Earlier in his career, he served as a principal, assistant principal, and classroom teacher at the middle and high school levels, leading measurable gains in academic performance and school culture.

Dr. King is actively engaged in statewide and national leadership networks and serves on the boards of The Innovation Project, the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, and the Eastern North Carolina YMCA. He also serves as Vice Chair of the Regional Superintendent Association and has participated in international professional learning experiences in Korea and Belize.

Dr. King holds a Doctor of Education degree from High Point University, a Master of School Administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and undergraduate degrees from Appalachian State University. His leadership philosophy centers on continuous improvement, strong community partnerships, and ensuring that all students—particularly those in rural communities—have access to high-quality educational opportunities that prepare them for future success.

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DAVID O. WHITE, Ed.D.

Superintendent | Education Leader | Adjunct Faculty

Dr. David O. White is a distinguished education leader with over two decades of experience spanning classroom instruction, school administration, and district-level leadership. He currently serves as Superintendent of Washington County Schools in Plymouth, North Carolina, where he provides strategic direction for instruction, operations, and financial management. In this role, he leads initiatives to improve student outcomes, advance school performance, and strengthen community and stakeholder engagement.

Prior to his current position, Dr. White served as Division Superintendent for King William County Public Schools (2016–2022), where he successfully guided districtwide improvement efforts, enhanced instructional quality, implemented school turnaround strategies, and developed budgets aligned with district priorities. He also served as Chief Secondary School Officer for Stafford County Public Schools, overseeing curriculum development, instructional leadership, and secondary school performance, and as Principal and Assistant Principal at Washington & Lee High School, leading schoolwide instructional improvements and professional development initiatives.

Dr. White began his career in education as a Business Education teacher with Fredericksburg City Public Schools, where he designed and implemented curriculum tailored to student needs while promoting academic achievement and engagement.

He holds a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Tech, a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Virginia Commonwealth University, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Mary Washington. Additionally, he has served as Adjunct Faculty at Virginia Tech, mentoring doctoral candidates in leadership and policy studies.

Dr. White is recognized for his expertise in strategic planning, school system finance and budgeting, curriculum and instructional leadership, turnaround initiatives for low-performing schools, and the development of accountability structures that drive student success. He is a member of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), and the North Carolina School Board Association (NCSBA), and has held leadership roles in regional educational initiatives including the Math Science Innovation Center and the Bridging Communities Regional CTE Consortium.

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EDUCATION TERMINOLOGY U.S. / Wales

<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Wales</u>
Superintendent (of a district)	Director of Education (at each local authority)
Principal	Head or Head-teacher
Assistant Principal	Deputy Head
Community schools (generic term for strategy); Community Partnership Schools (model developed in Florida, started at Evans, now at 44 across state); university assisted community schools (university arm imbedding university resources within k-12 system)	Community Focused Schools
Four core Community Partnership School/national community school pillars: Family and Community Engagement Integrated Student Supports (a.k.a. Wellness Supports) Expanded Learning Opportunities Collaborative Leadership	Three primary area for community focused school development: Family engagement community engagement multi-agency engagement
Community School Director	Community Focused Schools Manager (one per local authority)
FACE or Family and Community Engagement Coordinator	FEO or Family Engagement Officer
Free and Reduced Lunches (FRL)	Free School Meals
School Districts (in Florida = 67)	Local Authorities (22)
Head start (not in many schools, age 4)	Flying Start (targeted areas: provision from 2)
Elementary (grades k-5, ages 5-10)	Primary School (age 3 – 10)
Middle (grades 6-8, ages 11-13)	
High School (age 14-18)	Secondary (11-18) – Opt into advanced levels age 16-18. 40% of students opt in, but not all.
Children’s Cabinet (not in all counties)	Local Authority but does not include wider partners and not specifically focused on Children.
Electives	Options
Feeder	Cluster
Regional areas	Consortia
Rural	Leafy Areas
4200 public schools in Florida	1500 schools in Wales
	NAEL – National Academy of Educational Leadership



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Accreditation process of schools (different for each state)	Estyn - Inspectorate of Wales . All schools are inspected and reports published.
ESE - Exceptional Student Education	ALN – Additional Learning Needs
Title I Funding: Additional funding for schools in line with their Free and Reduced Lunch numbers	PDG: Pupil Development Grant . Additional funding for schools inline with their FSM numbers.
	Curriculum for Wales
<p>Structure and Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By state and by district. The education system of Florida is largely funded by state funds. • Curriculum standards are developed by the Florida Department of Education and regulated by individual districts. • Compulsory education is for children in grades K-12. Students can also apply for their GED in place of a diploma. Students may also attend virtual school. Primary Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ English Language Arts ○ Mathematics ○ Science ○ Social Studies ○ Health Education ○ Physical Education ○ Arts: Music, Dance, Theater 	<p>Structure and Curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The education system in Wales is largely state-funded and free-at-the-point-of-use. • Compulsory education is for children aged five to sixteen. • From September 2022, a new curriculum was introduced, created in Wales by teachers, partners, practitioners, and businesses. • The new curriculum focuses on six areas of learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expressive arts ○ Humanities ○ Health and wellbeing ○ Science and technology ○ Mathematics and numeracy ○ Languages, literacy, and communication • Literacy, numeracy, and digital skills are embedded throughout all curriculum areas.
<p>Assessments and Tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take FAST tests from years 3-10, three times per year • Students also take the SAT and ACT as a college entrance exam • College is student/family-funded unless they receive a grant or scholarship 	<p>Assessments and Tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take National Reading and Numeracy Tests from Year 2 to Year 9. • Students sit GCSE exams in Year 11 and have the choice to continue to Years 12 and 13 for A-level exams.
<p>Charter, Private, and Public Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public school is a school that is funded by the public, usually through government taxes, and is free to attend. Public schools 	<p>Teaching in Welsh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum in all schools up to age 16.



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<p>are part of a system of free public education that typically includes primary and secondary schools. They offer general education opportunities to children in kindergarten through grade 12, and extracurricular activities are also part of many public school programs. Public schools are regulated by the Florida Department of Education. Most community schools in U.S. are integrated into public schools located in economically disadvantaged communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter schools are public schools of choice. They are very popular—and among the fastest growing school choice options in Florida. Charter schools are largely free to innovate, and often provide more effective programs and choice to diverse groups of students. • Private schools require are tuition-funded. Private elementary and secondary schools are not licensed, approved, accredited or regulated by the Department of Education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools have the option to teach lessons entirely or mostly in Welsh, even in English-medium schools. <p>‘Welsh-medium’ schools teach children exclusively in Welsh (almost 450).</p>
<p>TBD or TBA (To be determined or To be announced)</p>	<p>TBC (To be confirmed)</p>

NOTES/REFLECTIONS

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