



North Carolina School Superintendents' Association
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**Hickory City Schools Superintendent Selected As
2026 NCSSA Dr. Brad Sneed Leadership Award Winner**

The North Carolina School Superintendents' Association (NCSSA) has announced the selection of Dr. Jennifer Griffin, Superintendent of Hickory Schools, as the recipient of the Dr. Brad Sneed Leadership Award. The award is presented in honor and recognition of a superintendent who has demonstrated a strong commitment to lifelong learning, unwavering integrity in leadership, and transformation of vision into action.

This annual award is presented to a graduate of the North Carolina School Superintendents' Associations' Superintendent Executive Leadership Development Program, a program that is designed to empower transformational education leaders for North Carolina's public schools. Dr. Griffin was selected by former Brad Sneed Leadership Award recipients.

The award is named in honor of Dr. Brad Sneed, who was serving as Carteret County Schools' Superintendent at the time of his death in October, 2008 at the age of 56. Among the innovative efforts he brought to this district was the establishment of the Marine Science Academy, later renamed as a memorial to him, which exposes students to hands-on marine science activities.

Previously, Dr. Sneed served as the Associate Vice-President for Leadership Development and Director of the Principals' Executive Program, the Deputy State Superintendent for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education, an adjunct professor with the Department of Educational Leadership, and Director of the Office of School Services at East Carolina University, and as the Craven County Schools' Superintendent. Dr. Sneed led with innovation and vision in preparing administrators for visionary leadership while never wavering from ethics of the highest order.

"Receiving the Dr. Brad Sneed Leadership Award is both an honor and a reminder of the responsibility we have as educational leaders to create opportunities that empower every student and educator to thrive," stated Dr. Griffin. "This recognition reflects the collective efforts of our Board of Education, dedicated staff, supportive families, and community partners who work together each day to move Hickory City Schools forward. I am grateful to be part of a district that embraces innovation, continuous learning, and a shared commitment to excellence."

"The Hickory City Schools Board of Education proudly congratulates Dr. Griffin on this outstanding and well-deserved recognition," said Amanda McGuire, Chair of the Hickory City Schools Board of Education. "Dr. Griffin leads with vision, integrity, and a relentless focus on student success. Her ability to inspire collaboration, champion professional growth, and transform strategic goals into meaningful results has strengthened our

district and positioned Hickory City Schools as a leader in public education. We are proud to celebrate this achievement and the positive impact of her leadership.”

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

Demonstrates vision and the ability to translate vision into specific goals. The recipient should be a person whose leadership has resulted in his or her district developing and/or implementing innovative programs and projects to benefit students.

Demonstrates a strong commitment to life-long learning, focusing on the continuous improvement of his or her leadership skills.

Demonstrate evidence of setting and achieving high standards of ethical conduct within his or her organization.

“Dr. Jennifer Griffin has served as superintendent of the Hickory City Schools for 3 years. She participates in the NCSA Superintendent Executive Leadership Program. She has provided high quality leadership development for her administrators by obtaining grants from Franklin Covey Education. She has also joined the High County STEM Network where administrators and teachers are receiving high quality professional development. She exemplifies the traits that guided Dr. Brad Sneed's career in educational leadership. She has demonstrated a vision for Hickory City Schools as an educational innovator and a strong commitment to continuous improvement and the highest standards of ethical conduct. She is a very deserving recipient of this award,” stated Jack Hoke, NCSA Executive Director.

Congratulations to Dr. Griffin on this well-deserved recognition!