

## **Ashe County Schools Leader, Dr. Eisa M. Cox, Named North Carolina Region 7 Superintendent of the Year and a Finalist for N.C. Superintendent of the Year**



***Dr. Terry Worrell, NWRESA Director, presented Dr. Cox with her award at the May 5 BOE meeting.***

Ashe County Schools proudly announces that Superintendent Dr. Eisa M. Cox has been named the Region 7 Superintendent of the Year by the Northwest Regional Educational Service Alliance (NWRESA). This prestigious honor places Dr. Cox among the eight finalists for the A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year Award, which recognizes exceptional leadership and enduring contributions to public education across the state.

A visionary and results-driven leader, Dr. Cox has championed academic excellence, innovation, and student-centered learning throughout her tenure. Under her leadership, Ashe County Schools has become a top-performing school system in the state for four consecutive years, earning accolades for gains in student achievement, graduation rates, and community engagement. Under her leadership, Ashe County Schools has earned multiple state and national honors for closing achievement gaps and academic excellence, including: 2024 National Schools to Watch, 2023 NCASCD Lighthouse School Award, 2021 National Blue Ribbon School, and 2024 and 2022 Leader in Me Lighthouse Awards.

“It is an incredible honor to be recognized by my peers in Region 7,” Dr. Cox said. “This award is a reflection of the outstanding team I work with every day—the educators, students, families, and community members of Ashe County. I am proud to lead in a district that believes in the power of public education and works together every day to champion opportunities for all students.”

Dr. Cox has led Ashe County Schools through transformative initiatives that have produced measurable results and expanded opportunities for students. Under her leadership, the district introduced innovative Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, including a Christmas Tree Production class, Fire Academy in conjunction with Wilkes Community College, Electrical Trades, and pathway expansions with an Adobe Academy, Project Lead the Way Aerospace and Civil Engineering, AP Computer Science and Early Childhood Education. Over the past five years, the graduation rate has increased from 84% to an all-time high of 88.89%, surpassing the state average. Dropouts have decreased, and students have achieved a 154% increase in workforce credentials, with 6,116 credentials earned over four years. Additionally, 120 students completed associate degrees or certificates from Wilkes Community College before graduating from high school. The district has also expanded internship opportunities through partnerships with more than 30 local businesses.

To support early learning, Ashe County Schools has also expanded access to pre-K programs to address community waitlists. Through successful grant writing, the district implemented a free after-school and

summer program that now serves more than 250 students. Ashe County Schools also provides universal free meals to all students and launched the annual Back to School Blast, an annual event that provides over 1,600 backpacks filled with school supplies, free haircuts, and over \$40,000 in new shoes from Shoes for Kids. This event is made possible through a strong collaboration with many community partners, and the Sheriff's Department.

“Dr. Cox’s recognition as Region 7 Superintendent of the Year is a reflection of the exceptional leadership she brings to Ashe County Schools each day,” said Josh Roten, Chairman of the Ashe County Board of Education. “Her vision and unwavering focus on students have transformed our district and positioned us as a leader across the state. Under Dr. Cox’s guidance, Ashe County Schools has become a model of innovation, academic excellence, and community partnership. On behalf of the Board of Education, we are incredibly proud of Dr. Cox and grateful for the difference she continues to make in the lives of our students, staff, and community.”

Beyond Ashe County, Dr. Cox serves in key leadership roles and has earned numerous professional recognitions. Dr. Eisa Cox received the 2024 North Carolina School Superintendent Association Dr. Brad Sneed Leadership Award and accepted the 2025 NCASA Raymond Sarbaugh Leadership Award on behalf of her district’s leadership team for leadership during Hurricane Helene.

She also serves in several regional and state leadership roles in North Carolina, including:

- Board of Governors for the North Carolina Governor’s School
- Chairperson, Northwest Regional Educational Service Alliance (2024–2025)
- Chairperson, Appalachian State University Public School Partnership (2023–2025)
- Co-Chair, NCSSA Women in the Lead
- Mentor to new and aspiring superintendents across the state

Dr. Cox is an active member of the Rotary Club of Ashe County and has been elected to serve on the Board for the North Carolina School Superintendents Association beginning in July 2025.

Dr. Cox has served in diverse districts including Guilford County Schools, Dorchester District Two (SC), Mooresville Graded Schools, Rowan-Salisbury Schools, and Ashe County Schools. She began her career as a high school biology and middle school science teacher, earning early recognition for her excellence in the classroom. She later served as a school and district administrator before being named a superintendent.

With a focus on student success, community partnerships, and innovation, she continues to lead Ashe County Schools with integrity, compassion, and a bold vision. Her commitment to excellence ensures that Ashe County remains a model district where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

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