

CALDWELL COUNTY SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT WINS 2023 A. CRAIG PHILLIPS NC SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD



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Dr. Don Phipps, Superintendent of Caldwell County Schools, was named the 2023 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year at an awards presentation and reception held Tuesday, Nov. 15.

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Dr. Don Phipps, Superintendent of Caldwell County Schools, was named the 2023 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year at an awards presentation and reception held Tuesday, Nov. 15.

The award is jointly presented annually by the [North Carolina Association of School Administrators \(NCASA\)](#), the [North Carolina School Superintendents' Association \(NCSSA\)](#) and the [North Carolina School Boards Association \(NCSBA\)](#). [Scholastic Education Solutions](#), who sponsored the event, also provided \$5,000 in recognition of Dr. Phipps' monumental achievement.

Dr. Phipps joined Caldwell County Schools as superintendent in 2018 and since that time has been a driving force in creating positive change in his district, particularly in the areas of budget management, student wellness, and community involvement.

"It's overwhelming and a real honor for me to represent the superintendents in North Carolina with the work that they do and to call them all my peers," said Phipps.

"Gratitude is not a strong enough word. I look forward to serving them and representing them."

Jack Hoke, Executive Director of the North Carolina School Superintendents' Association, praised Phipps for the leadership that has earned him the top honor for local superintendents in NC.

"Dr. Don Phipps is a leader among leaders," Hoke said. "His focus on addressing the critical needs of students and families in his community and his efforts to be a strong voice for his colleagues in state and federal education policy work all make him an exemplary district leader who is very worthy of the Superintendent of the Year honor."

Since becoming Superintendent of Caldwell County Schools, Dr. Phipps has made it his mission to establish robust resources to support student safety and well-being and to foster positive relationships between the school district and families.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, Dr. Phipps directed Caldwell County Schools to deploy school buses, equipped with wi-fi, to help students and families with limited internet access. When students began returning to school, Dr. Phipps and his team continued their focus on student support and launched a partnership with three community mental health providers to offer school-based mental health services for the 2022-23 school year.

"This work is critical, in my opinion," said Phipps. "This work has significantly and positively impacted the gap that existed where our students' mental health needs were identified and not being met."

Dr. Phipps also has worked with ministers in his community to create a Ministerial Alliance, a program which has helped to spread valuable information about critical issues such as free school lunch. In addition Caldwell County Schools engages the local community by offering needs-based services like college application and scholarship nights, Bootcamps for Grandparents seeking computer skills, and even an AgExpo focused on agricultural-related careers targeted at students.

"We must respond to needs in our community, but we only know what those needs are if we are part of the community," said Phipps. "We must be seen as trustworthy and genuine in our work."

As the 2023 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Phipps will compete at the national level for Superintendent of the Year at the [American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education](#), in San Antonio, TX, February 16-18, 2023.

The 2023 North Carolina Regional Superintendents of the Year, all of whom were nominees for this prestigious state award, were also recognized as such at the Nov.15 ceremony:

- **Region 1 | Northeast | Dr. Ethan Lenker, Pitt County Schools**
- **Region 2 | Southeast | Dr. Jerry L. Oates, Brunswick County Schools**
- **Region 3 | Central | Ms. Catty Q. Moore, Wake County Schools**
- **Region 4 | Sandhills | Dr. Aaron Fleming, Harnett County Schools**
- **Region 5 | Piedmont/Triad | Dr. Todd Martin, Yadkin County Schools**
- **Region 6 | Southwest | Dr. Jeff Booker, Gaston County Schools**
- **Region 7 | Northwest | Dr. Don Phipps, Caldwell County Schools**
- **Region 8 | Western | Ms. Angela Knight, Graham County Schools**