



GRIFFIN REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
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The Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) recently announced the recipients of the GSSA President's Award at its spring Bootstrap Conference in Savannah, Georgia. These awards are given to superintendents for outstanding leadership in their school systems and communities. This year, GSSA awarded Dr. Duke Bradley, the Superintendent of Newton County Schools, the 2026 Georgia School Superintendent Association (GSSA) President's Award.

Dr. Bradley began his career as a high school English teacher in DeKalb County Schools, where he quickly developed a passion for leadership and education policy. While attending law school, he served as a congressional intern focusing on education policy, gaining valuable insight into the intersection of public policy and educational practice. After earning his law degree, he worked with the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education as an instructor and program coordinator.

In October 2023, Dr. Bradley was sworn in as Superintendent of Newton County Schools. From his first day in the role, he demonstrated both urgency and intentionality. He launched a comprehensive 90-Day Entry Plan organized around the principles of listening, learning, and engaging, aligned with the Board of Education's priority areas of Academics, Culture, and Operations.

Academic performance across the district is also showing measurable progress. Recent results from the Georgia Department of Education's College and Career Readiness Performance Index reflect widespread improvement across multiple measures. Content Mastery increased across grade bands and subjects, readiness indicators strengthened, and Newton County Schools' overall CCRPI score increased by nine points. The district's graduation rate has also remained consistently above 90 percent.

Additional indicators further demonstrate the impact of Dr. Bradley's leadership. Participation in dual enrollment programs has more than doubled, increasing from 295 to 640 students. The number of Advanced Placement Scholars has grown from 78 to 181, while AP course offerings expanded from 25 to 32 and participation increased by nearly twenty percent. Math proficiency has improved at every tested grade level, reading proficiency has increased in five of six grade levels, and the number of eighth-grade students earning high school credit has risen by forty percent.

Beyond academic achievement, Dr. Bradley has positioned Newton County Schools as a leader in preparing students for the future workforce. In August 2025, the district unveiled its

Framework for Advancing Workforce Development, an initiative that connects classroom learning with real-world career opportunities. Developed in partnership with business leaders, higher education institutions, and industry partners, the framework outlines a comprehensive strategy for expanding career pathways and ensuring students graduate prepared for both college and career.

Recognizing that literacy is foundational to all academic success, Dr. Bradley has led the development of a districtwide Literacy Blueprint designed to strengthen reading outcomes for students at every grade level. He has also strengthened the district's instructional core through the creation of a draft Excellence in Teaching Framework, developed collaboratively with input from the district's Teacher Advisory Council. By involving teachers directly in the design of this framework, he ensured that the district's instructional expectations reflect the real experiences of educators in the classroom while promoting consistent, high-quality teaching practices across the system.

Dr. Bradley has also prioritized transparent and meaningful communication with stakeholders. Since becoming superintendent, he has implemented initiatives designed to strengthen engagement and trust, including Community Conversation meetings, public budget workshops, and the creation of an online E-SPLOST tracker that allows citizens to monitor capital projects in real time.

Dr. Bradley also communicates directly with staff and families through regular superintendent newsletters and recently launched a bi-weekly publication titled "Our People," which highlights the stories of educators and staff members whose contributions often go unnoticed. In addition, he expanded the district's employee recognition programs by introducing the HERO Awards for classified staff and establishing new districtwide honors such as Support Professional of the Year and Counselor of the Year.

His leadership in communication and community engagement has not gone unnoticed. In 2026, Dr. Bradley was named a Superintendent to Watch by the National School Public Relations Association, an honor awarded to only thirty superintendents nationwide who have fewer than five years of experience in the role.

Dr. John Zauner, the GSSA Executive Director, had this to say, "Dr. Duke Bradley has a unique perspective on his role as superintendent. He emphasizes transparency and communication as the leader of the district. Dr. Bradley continues to be accessible as well as an innovator for his profession. It is clear he represents a new generation of superintendents."

Dr. Stephanie Gordy, Executive Director of Griffin RESA stated, "Dr. Duke Bradley has done so much for Newton County Schools in a short time. I am fortunate to have the honor and privilege of working with this exemplary school superintendent on both regional and local school system initiatives. Our entire region benefits from his commitment to his school system and his exceptional leadership."

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