



SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS CLEVELAND COUNTY, NC

The Cleveland County Board of Education is seeking a superintendent to lead the school system as it continues its pursuit of excellence. Applications are due by June 8, 2026.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Cleveland County Schools serves approximately 14,000 students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade across 27 schools, including 15 elementary schools, 1 intermediate school, 4 middle schools, 4 traditional high schools, one early college, and alternative education programs. The district employs over 2,000 staff members who, in partnership with families and the broader community, are committed to ensuring every student performs at their highest potential. Guided by its motto, "Cultivating Excellence," Cleveland County Schools places strong emphasis on rigorous academics, career and technical education, and preparing students for college, careers, and citizenship. The district is governed by a nine-member, partisan Board of Education, elected at-large to serve staggered four-year terms.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Located in the western Piedmont region of North Carolina, at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Cleveland County is a community of approximately 100,000 residents with a rich history and a forward-looking spirit. The county seat, Shelby, features a vibrant and historic uptown district surrounded by local businesses, restaurants, and cultural venues. Other communities within the county include Boiling Springs, Kings Mountain, Grover, Fallston, Lawndale, and Casar. Cleveland County offers a high quality of life with a moderate cost of living, access to outdoor recreation, and a strong sense of community pride. The county is home to Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, a private university offering a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, which enriches the educational and cultural fabric of the region. Cleveland County's location—approximately 45 miles west of Charlotte—provides residents with access to a major metropolitan area while preserving the county's distinct character. The community is supported by a diverse economy encompassing advanced manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, and small business, along with civic organizations and partnerships that contribute to educational advancement and community development.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

Candidates must meet the legal requirements to be licensed as a superintendent in North Carolina or otherwise be qualified and eligible to serve under State Board of Education policy. In addition, the selected candidate will be required to live in Cleveland County.

A successful candidate will also possess a demonstrated track record of excellence in the following areas:

Experience/Background

- Establishing and articulating a compelling vision for continuous improvement across the district
- Serving in a variety of educational leadership roles, with a preference for experience as a teacher, principal, and superintendent
- Understanding the unique demographics, culture, and dynamics of Cleveland County and tailoring leadership strategies accordingly
- Strong decision-making, delegation, and follow-through

Student-Centered & Performance-Driven

- Making confident, data-informed decisions with a methodical and courageous approach to addressing challenges
- Leading the successful turnaround of low-performing schools and improving outcomes system-wide
- Applying educational research and evidence-based practices to strengthen curriculum, instruction, and student achievement
- Prioritizing students in all decision-making and policy development, ensuring a student-centered culture district-wide
- Motivating and engaging teachers, staff, parents, and students to support the academic and overall success of all learners
- Leadership in creating and maintaining safe and orderly learning environments
- Strategic planning—short-term and long-term—across academics, operations, and facilities

People & Resource Leader

- Identifying and cultivating strong leadership within the system, while implementing clear and accountable performance plans
- Understanding and managing school system finances (capital and expense) and budgeting with clarity and fiscal responsibility
- Planning, funding, and oversight of school facilities

Stakeholder Engagement

- Communicating transparently and effectively with all stakeholders, while fostering trust, honesty, and integrity in all interactions
- Listening actively and building strong, positive relationships with the Board of Education, intergovernmental partnerships, the Cleveland County School Educational Foundation, and the broader community
- Engagement in community activities and visibility within the district

APPLY ONLINE

Applicants must complete the board's required online application form, accessible via the North Carolina School Boards Association's webpage at <https://www.ncsba.org/legal/north-carolina-vacancies/>. *Please do not contact, or ask anyone you know to contact, individual board members about your interest in or application for this position.* All inquiries should be directed to Sam Thorp, Director of Executive Search & Member Engagement, North Carolina School Boards Association, at sthorp@ncsba.org or 919-841-4040. *All inquiries will be kept confidential.*

Click below to learn more about the schools and the community



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