

# **SURRY COUNTY SCHOOLS**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Hollie Lyons, Communications Coordinator  
P.O. Box 364  
Dobson, North Carolina 27017  
336/386-8211 Fax: 336/386-4756  
E-Mail: [lyonsh@surry.k12.nc.us](mailto:lyonsh@surry.k12.nc.us)

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **Cedar Ridge Elementary Recognized as Lighthouse School**

On February 4, 2022, Cedar Ridge Elementary School was awarded the prestigious 2022 North Carolina Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (NCASCD) Lighthouse School Award. The Lighthouse Award is presented annually to schools that have furthered student achievement in innovative and creative ways and have nurtured a positive and supportive school and community atmosphere. The award was presented at the 2022 Conference.

Cedar Ridge was one of two schools statewide to receive the award from applications representing school systems statewide. Cedar Ridge Principal Donna Bledsoe credits the student success to “utilizing a multi-tiered support system for academics and behaviors through the implementation of the district Leadership Framework.” Students are taught leadership skills to foster their successes both inside and outside the school setting, being trained in zones of regulation, the use of calming corners, mindfulness, and yoga practices. “Through these practices, students and staff can model leadership firmly rooted in self-awareness and resiliency to lead self, lead others, and in turn change the world around them,” says Bledsoe.

In 2021, Surry County Schools implemented a leadership framework, intending to create a culture of leadership to equip students and staff to live, learn, and lead as productive citizens. Mrs. Bledsoe and Amanda Moser, school counselor, were integral parts of the Leadership Design Team which created the vision and helped with lesson planning for district implementation. The staff at Cedar Ridge took what they learned through designing the framework and adopted these strategies in their school. Classrooms have flexible seating practices, utilize fidgets, and have calming corners. Teachers greet students each day and have check-in systems for students. Mrs. Moser leads staff professional development in effective practices, along with daily coaching of both students and staff for implementation of effective classroom practices to ensure we maintain an inclusive school environment. The adoption of these practices has had a dramatic effect on discipline referrals, having decreased 83% in the past five years.

Cedar Ridge also prides itself on providing choices for students. Each student, kindergarten through fifth grade, gets their choice of a 50-minute enrichment each week, which focuses on an individual’s passions, innovations, and exploration. During this time, students may choose to create in Minecraft, innovate in robotic practices, learn to code, garden, practice yoga, train for a 5K, enhance their digital arts practices, or even learn to play instruments like the banjo.

Along with these opportunities for student choices, Cedar Ridge has encouraged students to find the joy of reading in what they call “joy practices.” These practices include “random reading spots,” where students can take and lend books, monthly literacy focuses, and schoolwide reading goals. The effect these practices have had on the school has been outstanding, increasing media center circulation by 3,000 books over one academic year. During the 2021-22 school year, the school has used its monthly reading focus to incorporate a different country each month to broaden the students’ diversity of literature. The school is not only hoping to spark joy in reading but also practice equity in literacy offerings for students and continue to grow the next generation of global leaders.

“I am proud of the culminating efforts by our staff over the years to create a school climate where we work to bring joy to learning through innovative practices which focus on doing what is best for our students in all areas. I am blessed to be able to learn and lead along with this wonderful staff as we continue to put students first in all we do each day,” said Bledsoe.

Superintendent Dr. Travis L. Reeves commented, “Cedar Ridge Elementary School is a prime example of what a Lighthouse School should look like. This school emphasizes sparking joy and shines a bright light on positive learning environments for students based on our leadership framework. I am proud of this staff and administrators for their leadership and dedication to their students. The past two years have been a challenge, but this group of committed educators has continued to serve their students with a caring heart and high expectations. Congratulations to Mrs. Donna Bledsoe and the staff at Cedar Ridge for being a Lighthouse for their students!”

Photo 1 (l-r): Donna Bledsoe and Amanda Moser pose with NCASCD Award after the award presentation.