

Dr. Alice E. Barfield Named One of Three National Finalists for 2026 National Superintendent of the Year

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Alice E. Barfield, Superintendent of the Glades County School District, has been named one of only three national finalists for the 2026 National Superintendent of the Year Award by the National Association of School Superintendents (NASS).

The prestigious award recognizes exceptional educational leaders who demonstrate visionary leadership, innovation, measurable student achievement, organizational excellence, and an unwavering commitment to students, educators, and the communities they serve.

A nationally recognized turnaround leader, Dr. Barfield has dedicated more than 30 years to improving outcomes in rural, high-poverty, and historically low-performing school districts. Since becoming Glades County's elected superintendent in 2020, she has led one of Florida's most remarkable district transformations. During her tenure, the district improved its state ranking from 61st out of Florida's 67 school districts to 24th, while earning back-to-back "A" district designations—the first school district in Florida's Heartland region to achieve that distinction.

Under Dr. Barfield's leadership, Glades County increased its graduation rate from 78.5 percent to being on target for 100% for the 2026-2027 school year. She also expanded college and career opportunities through the Moore Haven High School Collegiate Academy and Career and Technical Education programs and made significant investments in teacher compensation to recruit and retain outstanding educators.



Dr. Alice Beth Barfield, Superintendent of Glades County School District, has been named one of only three finalists nationwide for the 2026 National Superintendent of the Year Award, recognizing exceptional leadership, student achievement, and innovation

The 2026 National Superintendent of the Year will be announced during the National Association of School Superintendents' Annual Awards Ceremony in October 2026 in Oceanside, California. As one of only three finalists, Dr. Barfield will proudly represent Glades County School District, the State of Florida, and rural public education on the national stage.

"I am deeply honored by this recognition," said Dr. Barfield. "Awards like this are humbling because they remind us that no one accomplishes meaningful work alone. Every day, I rely on mentors, fellow superintendents, educators, family, and friends who willingly share their wisdom, challenge my thinking, and encourage me to become a better leader. I have never been afraid to ask questions or seek advice because I believe the strongest leaders are lifelong learners."

"Throughout my career, I have also believed that there is no substitute for an exceptional work ethic. Success doesn't happen by accident. It comes from showing up every day, doing the hard work, making decisions based on common sense, and refusing to accept the status quo simply because 'that's the way it's always been done.' If something isn't serving children well, then we have a responsibility to find a better way. That mindset has shaped every leadership decision I have made."

"Every morning, thousands of parents entrust us with what they value most—their children. There is no greater responsibility than earning and protecting that trust. I believe leadership requires more than making good decisions; it requires being present, accessible, and willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed. Being a superintendent is not a title I hold during business hours. It is a commitment I carry every hour of every day because children deserve leaders who never stop advocating for them."

"For me, this recognition is not simply about one superintendent or one school district. It is about proving to rural communities across Florida and America that excellence is never determined by a district's size, its location, or its wealth—it is determined by the expectations we set, the relationships we build, and the belief we have in every child.

"Success should never make us comfortable. It should inspire us to ask, 'What's next?' and 'How can we serve our students even better?' That's the culture we have built in Glades County. We celebrate our accomplishments, but we never stop learning, growing, and raising the bar because our students deserve our very best—every single day.

"If there is one message, I hope this recognition sends across the country, it is this: greatness is not reserved for large school districts or affluent communities. Greatness is built by people who believe in children, refuse to accept limits, and work relentlessly to create opportunities. A child's future should never be determined by their ZIP code, and I will continue to fight every day to ensure that every child—regardless of where they call home—has access to the education they deserve."

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