



Armfield Foundation Grant Supports Surry County Schools' Groundbreaking Leadership Development Initiative



CLIENT Surry County Schools

LOCATION Surry County, NC

SIZE 1,062 employees

INDUSTRY Education/Philanthropy

FUNDER The Armfield Foundation

CLIENT PROFILE AND CHALLENGE

Surry County, located in the foothills of North Carolina and part of the Piedmont Triad region, has a significant agricultural economy and a well-established, assorted industrial base. But as with similar counties in the US, attracting and retaining economic talent is a key challenge. Surry County Schools (SCS) plays an instrumental role not just in shaping the minds of the future, but in bolstering the economic vitality of the county. The district's strategy to attract more families and businesses is straightforward: develop a reputation of excellence and become known as the "leadership" school district of North Carolina. As stated by SCS superintendent, Dr. Travis L. Reeves, "We believe that everyone has the capacity for leadership, and making leadership development accessible to all will help us fulfill our mission of empowering youth to grow as citizen leaders and to achieve their dreams." How could the school district stand out and drive this positive change?

SOLUTION

Surry County Schools (SCS) chose to partner with the Center for Creative Leadership, based on CCL's [research](#) that investing in leadership development at all levels in K-12 education — from superintendents, principals, teachers, staff to students — can drive transformational change.

The Edward M. Armfield, Sr. Foundation, a local foundation that typically provides scholarships to college-bound students graduating from public high schools in Surry County, granted an initial \$150,000 to address this challenge, with a further commitment of \$400,000 over the next five years.

"We are so proud to invest in the amazing leaders in Surry County through their partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership. We believe in the power of leadership development and know that our investment is creating real change in Surry County, North Carolina, and beyond," says Mindy Oakley, executive director of the Armfield Foundation.

“This program helped me look at myself as a leader differently than before. It allowed me the opportunity to connect with others and develop relationships that will last the rest of my career in just 2 days. I feel heard and valued as a member of this group of people.”

— Summer Kreeger, Teacher,
Surry County Schools



A design team from SCS, including administrators, teachers, staff, and students, collaborated with CCL facilitators to create the SCS Leadership Framework. This framework includes 14 leadership attributes categorized into three areas: Leading Self, Leading with Others, and Changing Your World. These attributes were used to develop lessons for students at each school level. To ensure teachers could authentically lead this initiative, we established a Teacher Leadership Academy, bringing together cohorts of teachers from the district's 19 schools for leadership development.



Today, the SCS Leadership Framework is actively displayed and practiced in schools and classrooms, drives improvement efforts, and has become a core part of the SCS identity. Over the past 5 years, the Teacher Leadership Academy has seen 15 cohorts of teachers, and SCS principals and assistant principals receive regular leadership development training.

RESULTS

By building and implementing a collective understanding of what Surry County means by “leadership,” the district has created a key differentiator that will help ensure its future growth and success. The program has reached beyond those who would typically receive leadership development, such as superintendents and principals. It has instead focused on every person in the system, all the way down to preschoolers, creating a systemic change in leadership.

“The focus on developing leadership capacity throughout the district has been outstanding in Surry County. It has resulted in a system full of highly effective leaders that model and teach leadership to each other and to their students every day,” said Greg Cameron, Director of the Education Sector at CCL.

The partnership between SCS, CCL, and the Armfield Foundation highlights the transformative power of leadership development in education, setting a powerful example for other districts across the country.

PARTICIPANTS SAY

“Leadership is something to be nurtured, and shared. CCL prepares us to be the best stewards and proponents for creating future leaders of all levels and types.”

— LuAnne Llewellyn, Director, Federal Programs, Surry County Schools

“This program forces you to learn about yourself and others. This understanding will help you lead change.”

— Jonathan Carpenter, Assistant Principal, Surry Central High School

“This is an excellent opportunity to find ways to positively interact with coworkers and students. It challenges you to think about leadership differently.”

— Amy Butler, Elementary Curriculum Coach, Surry County Schools

BY THE NUMBERS

Based on responses from 70 participants (district team, leadership team, and teachers), 8 weeks after participating in a leadership development program with CCL

99%

feel the content they learned is relevant to the challenges they face as a leader.

96% believe they have been able to apply what they learned at work in their job

99% feel equipped with the practical tools and resources to apply what they learned

84% report it increased their energy to help their organization succeed

82% believe it has increased their awareness of the impact of their behavior on others

