

# Outstanding Administrative Support Award

This prestigious award recognizes and honors an outstanding administrator who through professional work has demonstrated exemplary support for science education at the school, district, and/or county level. This award honors an administrator whose primary responsibility is outside the area of science instruction. This year the \$1000 award and plaque will be presented to Dr. Darlene Ryan virtually during the NSELA Leadership Summit on May 13 and during the Summer Leadership Institute in July.



**Dr. Darlene C. Ryan**

*Assistant Superintendent  
for Elementary*  
Durham Public Schools  
North Carolina

Dr. Darlene Ryan has demonstrated outstanding leadership in science/STEM education in three North Carolina school districts starting as a classroom teacher in 1978 to her current role as Assistant Superintendent for Elementary for Durham Public Schools. Her passion and long-term support over thirty years for science, STEM, and technology education at the local, state, national and international levels is truly exemplary and serves as a model for other leaders. Dr. Ryan's past work roles include teacher leader, STEM coach, district-level science/math coordinator, principal, and executive director for curriculum/instruction. Even though Darlene in her more recent work roles is responsible for all content areas, her support for science/STEM education has never wavered. Due to her excellent work, she has received numerous awards including these honors: North Chatham School Teacher of the Year, Distinguished Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching, UNC at Chapel Hill, NCSLA Herman Gatling Award for Outstanding Science Education Leadership, and Principal of the Year in Chapel Hill Carrboro City School System.

Dr. Ryan's current supervisor states "she is an excellent leader, colleague, communicator and collaborator. Her effective communication skills allow her to facilitate principal meetings involving district staff while providing strategies to build instructional leadership." In her work with elementary principals, she supports monitoring science data, provides specific recommendations for improvement, and pairs struggling schools with high performing schools. Her collaborative teamwork with other district leaders on equity and inclusion is showcased as a model for other U.S. districts. Dr. Ryan empowers school leaders to re-imagine science education through STEAM initiatives that have resulted in positive outcomes for students. This includes collaborating with community organizations for student-centered project-based learning. Her legacy for project-based learning continues in her previous district through an ongoing partnership with the NC State Botanical Gardens. Earlier work in her first district built a sustainable partnership with the NC Zoo. As a member of the NC Zoo team, Darlene traveled to Uganda to work with schools and national parks to assess learning needs and hosted a Uganda team in North Carolina.

Throughout Dr. Ryan's education leadership journey, she has been and continues to be actively engaged with science education organizations and takes on leadership positions. Examples include NSELA President and Region C Director; NC Science Teachers Association District 5 Director; and NC Science Leadership Association President, District Director, and Leadership Fellows Facilitator. Dr. Ryan has given numerous science/STEM presentations at state and national conferences and is the co-author of a book chapter on "School Leadership and Politics".

NSELA is proud to present the 2021 OASA Award to Dr. Darlene Ryan. Her over thirty-year commitment is truly exemplary and a model for other leaders. A quote from a support letter: "Darlene's support for and understanding of the importance of science/STEM is ingrained in her entire persona: she walks the talk in every respect!"