CHATHAM
COUNTY SCHOOLS

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Photo (left to right): Lessley Saenz-Mader, Heather McDaniel, JenniferStickney, and Anita Wilder
Photo credit: Chatham County Schools

Chatham Middle School's Jennifer Stickney Named Chatham County Schools' Fall 2026 Exceptional Children Educator of Excellence

PITTSBORO, N.C. — Chatham County Schools (CCS) is proud to announce that Jennifer Stickney, Extended Content Teacher in Exceptional Children's Services at Chatham Middle School, has been selected as the district's Fall 2026 Exceptional Children Educator of Excellence.

A dedicated educator and leader, Stickney has devoted her career to Chatham Middle School, where she has earned the trust of students, families and colleagues through her commitment to serving students with significant disabilities with dignity, creativity and high expectations.

"Jennifer is widely recognized throughout Chatham Middle School as a model for how to serve students with the most significant disabilities with dignity, high expectations, and creativity," her nominator shared. "Her students consistently make meaningful progress toward their IEP goals, and by every account — from families, from colleagues, and from the students themselves — they thrive in her classroom."

Stickney's impact extends beyond her own students and classroom. She serves as a mentor and resource for newer Exceptional Children staff, models effective practices for general education colleagues, and works alongside school administrators as they consider how best to support students with significant needs.

Her leadership also reaches beyond Chatham Middle School. Through years of district-level

committee service and her work with families, Stickney has helped strengthen practices and build relationships grounded in trust, collaboration and a shared commitment to student success.

“Jennifer’s work reflects what we want for every student receiving Exceptional Children services in Chatham County Schools — to be known, valued, challenged and given meaningful opportunities to grow,” said Lessley Saenz-Mader, Director of Exceptional Children’s Services and AIG for Chatham County Schools. “She combines high expectations with genuine compassion, and the trust she has built with students, families and colleagues speaks to the impact she has made throughout her career. Jennifer is an exceptional educator and advocate, and we are incredibly proud to recognize her with this honor.”

“Jennifer Stickney represents the very best of what an Extended Content Teacher can be: a skilled instructor, a compassionate advocate, and a quiet but powerful leader in her building,” her nominator said. “It is without reservation that I recommend her for this recognition.”

The Exceptional Children Educator of Excellence recognition is presented through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Office of Exceptional Children and celebrates outstanding educators and professionals who serve students with disabilities. Public school units across North Carolina select local honorees to represent their schools and districts as Educators of Excellence.

As Chatham County Schools’ Fall 2026 honoree, Stickney will represent the district at the statewide Exceptional Children Conference in Greensboro, where Educators of Excellence from across North Carolina are recognized. The annual conference brings together educators, administrators, and other professionals who serve students with disabilities to share effective practices, strengthen professional learning and support improved outcomes for students.

For more information about CCS’s Exceptional Children Department, please contact CCS’s Public Information Officer, Jessica Pasión, at (919) 542-3626 or visit www.chatham.k12.nc.us/page/exceptional-children-ec.

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About Chatham County Schools
Chatham County Schools serves more than 8,500 students across 20 schools in central North Carolina. With a commitment to excellence, equity, anπd engagement, the district works in partnership with families and the community to prepare ALL students for success in college, careers, and life.

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