

TULSA WORLD

TOP STORY

EDITOR'S PICK

Union's Kirt Hartzler named State Superintendent of the Year

Lenzy Krehbiel-Burton

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Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Rebecka Peterson is congratulated by Union Superintendent Kirt Hartzler last year. Peterson went on to win National Teacher of the Year in April. Hartzler was just named the 2023 State Superintendent of the Year.

Mike Simons, Tulsa World file

Lenzy Krehbiel-Burton

Along with having the National Teacher of the Year, Union Public Schools is now home to the State Superintendent of the Year, as well.

As part of its summer conference in Oklahoma City, the Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School Administration recognized Union's Kirt Hartzler on Friday as the 2023 State Superintendent of the Year.

"It is indeed an honor to be named Superintendent of the Year for the state of Oklahoma," Hartzler said. "Leading the students, teachers and staff at Union Public Schools has been an uncommon privilege for me and one that I hold dear.

"Our students are deserving of our very best, and there is not a superintendent in our state that doesn't shoulder that responsibility with the utmost seriousness and respect. It is our duty to nurture and protect the quality of public education, as it is the lifeblood of our democracy."

A graduate of Evangel University, Northeastern State University and Oklahoma State University, Hartzler started with Union Public Schools in 1986 as a high school social studies teacher. After stints as an assistant principal, principal of the district's Eighth Grade Center, assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent, he was named Union's superintendent in July 2013.

Hartzler is the first Tulsa-area honoree since Jenks' Stacey Butterfield was named the 2019 State Superintendent of the Year. Hartzler will go on to represent Oklahoma in competition for the American Association of School Administrators' National Superintendent of Year award — an accolade never won by an Oklahoma school district leader.

"Leadership is about building community, cultivating and empowering other leaders and focusing on student success," CCOSA Executive Director Pam Deering said in a written statement. "These school leaders have led through many challenges. They have worked tirelessly to provide opportunities for students to learn, grow and realize their full potential. Dr. Hartzler is among the best of Oklahoma administrators."

The announcement marks the second consecutive year that a Union educator has been recognized at the state level. Named the **National Teacher of the Year in April**, Union High School math teacher Rebecka Peterson is also the 2022 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year.