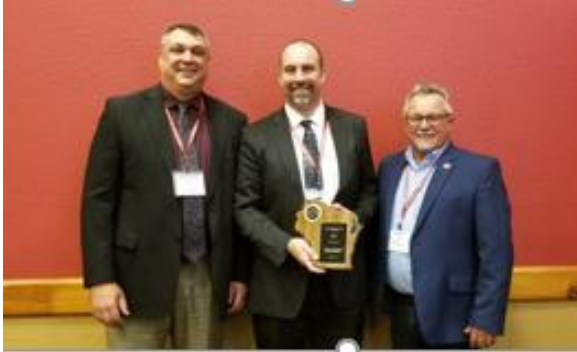




## Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA) 2019 District Administrator of the Year Award

Ben Niehaus | [Florence County School District](#)



Ben Niehaus was hired in March of 2013 on a shared services agreement as the Florence County and Goodman Armstrong Creek District Superintendent. Ben had a short tenure to learn and understand the needs of the educational community before passing a Florence County School District operating referendum in November of 2014 and building and implementing a FABLAB the following year through a grant. He then followed passing a building referendum in 2017. Mr. Niehaus' collaborative spirit continues to grow as there are now a total of 10 shared services agreements with five other school districts as of

2019-20 academic year. He also acts as a formal and informal peer mentor to other Superintendents in his region and beyond. He is the current treasurer of the Northern Lakes School Conference and serves on numerous other school and community committees. Ben was instrumental in the development of the Industry Advisory Council, which creates conversations between education and industry. These conversations provide context to support and help prepare students in securing local employment or post-secondary options upon high school graduation.

Ben demonstrates a consistent support of Florence County School District and extends his contributions far beyond his own district to include other rural districts and communities. His passion for rural education is exercised daily in his current role as Florence County School District Superintendent, but spreads as he fulfills his role as the President of the WIRSA Executive Board. Ben is also the most senior Superintendent in our Woodland Regional Technical Academy partnership with NWTC, Pembine, Goodman-Armstrong Creek and Niagara school districts.

Ben's drive as a lifelong learner, paired with his passion for equitable educational opportunities promotes his involvement in legislative conversations where he always provides the rural context for consideration in state and legal decision-making. Ben is never afraid to "fight the good fight" for students and rural districts, whether the topic is transportation, Higher Learning Commission and dual credit, Special Education Services, etc. Ben is a steady voice of advocacy for the students and community he serves, moving the needle past conversation and towards change/improvement.

Ben was nominated by a collaboration from NWTC, UWGB, Florence County SD, Florence County Business and Industry, the School Districts of Niagara, Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine and Goodman-Armstrong Creek