

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AESA Honors Dr. Daveda Colbert with 2026 Women of Inspiration in Leadership Award

October 14, 2026 – The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs) is pleased to announce Daveda J. Colbert, Superintendent of Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency (WRESA) in Michigan, as the recipient of the 2026 AESA Women of Inspiration in Leadership Award. The award honors an extraordinary woman who inspires others, earns the respect of her colleagues, and empowers and mentors women in leadership.

Dr. Colbert has dedicated more than 32 years to education and currently leads Michigan's largest intermediate school district, supporting 33 local school districts, 95 public school academies and more than 260,000 students across 43 communities. Her career has spanned roles from classroom teacher and principal to assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, and superintendent.

Central to Dr. Colbert's leadership is a commitment to helping others find opportunities to grow and lead. She launched the Wayne County Women in Leadership Network and the Wayne County African American Leaders Network, creating opportunities for connection, mentorship, and professional development among educational leaders. Her work to strengthen women in leadership has also extended beyond Wayne County, including sharing the impact of the Women in Leadership Network with more than 400 women leaders at the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators statewide conference in April 2026.

Her impact is equally evident in the educational opportunities developed under her leadership. Wayne County has expanded access to high-quality preschool, developed the new Wayne County Early Childhood Center, and strengthened pathways into the education profession, including efforts to grow the special education teacher pipeline. Dr. Colbert has also helped expand aviation and aeronautics opportunities for students traditionally underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) opportunities.

"Dr. Colbert represents exactly what this award is intended to celebrate," said Joan Wade, Executive Director of AESA. "She leads with purpose, but she also makes a deliberate effort to create opportunities for others to lead. Her example reminds us that truly inspirational leadership isn't only about what you accomplish yourself. It's about opening doors, building confidence, and helping others see what is possible."

As Superintendent, Dr. Colbert has also brought her leadership to statewide and national conversations. She has served on Michigan commissions focused on school safety and mental health, chairs the School Finance

Research Foundation, has represented Michigan on the AASA Legislative Governing Board since 2019, and was appointed to the AASA Executive Committee in 2025.

Dr. Colbert will be formally recognized during the 2026 AESA Annual Conference & Expo, December 2-4 in Orlando, Florida, alongside AESA's other 2026 national award recipients.

About the Association of Educational Service Agencies

AESA is the national organization representing Educational Service Agencies and regional educational organizations across the United States.

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Media Contact:

Claire Sowder, Director of Communications and Marketing | csowder@aesa.us | 515-979-0392

Dana Chicklas, Senior Executive Director of Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations | chickld@resa.net | 734-945-8857