



FEATURED MEMBER ARTICLE

Name : Mike Beighley

Current School District and Location: Whitehall School District, Whitehall, Wisconsin

INTRODUCTION

Mike Beighley, Superintendent of the Whitehall School District, has distinguished himself as a leading voice in education innovation, especially in rural settings. Located in west-central Wisconsin, Whitehall is a district that punches well above its weight—thanks in large part to Beighley's vision and leadership. He has spearheaded system-wide initiatives that prioritize student-centered learning, workforce readiness, and future-ready competencies, making Whitehall a model of what's possible when bold leadership meets collaborative action.

EDUCATION

Mike earned his Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire and holds a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Winona State University. He has continued his professional learning through statewide leadership academies and innovation networks, including work with the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA) and CESA 4.

EXPERIENCE

Mike began his career as a classroom teacher, coach, and building leader before taking on the role of superintendent for the past 28 years. With over 30 years of service in education, he has consistently focused on building high-functioning systems that empower educators and inspire learners. Now in his third decade of district leadership, Beighley is known for his ability to navigate change, facilitate cross-district and private sector partnerships, and lead innovation within the core values of public education.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS

Under his leadership, Whitehall School District has implemented forward-thinking instructional models that support personalized learning and expanded opportunities for all students. He has been a regional leader in the CESA 4 LIFTToFFS initiative, a cross-district collaborative aimed at building future-ready learning systems through shared innovation, teacher leadership, and intentional redesign.

Mike has also championed the integration of emerging technologies—including AI literacy, experiential STEM programming, and real-world learning experiences with projects like the Mobile Skills Laboratory and Whitehall Regional Emerging Technology Laboratory. He is a strong advocate for preparing students for the future they are entering—not the one he grew up in. “Embracing AI in schools is no longer optional,” he says. “The world is changing fast, and we have a responsibility to equip our students with the tools, ethics, and awareness to thrive in that reality.”

His forward-thinking yet grounded approach earned him a nomination for the 2025 NASS Excellence in Innovation Award.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE BEIGHLEY

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent has to be more than a manager of operations. We're called to be system designers, culture shapers, and storytellers of what's possible in public education. The demands are significant, but so is the opportunity to build a school experience that truly prepares students for what lies ahead. Superintendents must lead with purpose, but also with curiosity—we can't afford to stop learning and certainly cannot be fearful to lead forward.

What new understandings did you acquire after two or three years on the job?

One of the most important realizations I had early in my superintendency was that innovation doesn't scale through directives—it scales through relationships. This has never been more evident than our work with the Regional Technology Lab and CESA 4 LIFTToFFS program. I have learned how powerful it is when leaders open their systems to peer learning and shared experimentation. I have also learned the importance of being visible and present in both the school community and the broader community. Change only moves forward when there is trust and trust must be earned each and every day.

Share an idea to use or something you've learned with your colleagues.

I've learned that meaningful change is most sustainable when it's authentically focused on our children and their needs. One of the best things we've done is to intentionally make ourselves uncomfortable and understand the need to truly reimagine learning to best prepare our kids for the exponential global environment they will live in. Whether we're exploring AI integration, developing future awareness, or expanding SEL supports, those closest to the work help shape the direction. My advice to colleagues: We cannot afford to continually evaluate based on the past. That world is essentially gone and we must lead the way to a prosperous future for our children. Be curious, be aggressive and be relentless in the pursuit of learning systems that provide future ready skills to ALL children.