

## The School of Engineering and Arts is a Green Ribbon School!



Robbinsdale Area School District  
Golden Valley, Minnesota

### Real Science in a “SEA-cret” Forest

Part of the Robbinsdale Area School District, the School of Engineering and Arts (SEA), is rooted in the STEAM (science-technology-engineering-arts-math) philosophy. SEA’s school traditions, not just the curriculum, are built on the foundation of inquiry and hands-on learning. Originally built in 1970 with an open school concept, SEA was named after Minnesota environmentalist, Sigurd Olson, as it was an environmentally focused school. When it re-opened in 2012, it set out to create a community that broke the traditional educational paradigm yet fit within the established boundaries for a public school.

SEA tracks utility consumption in Sky-

**When SEA re-opened in 2012, it set out to create a community that broke the traditional educational paradigm, yet fit within the established boundaries for a public school.**

Analytics. Its solid waste diversion rate is just over 56 percent. Food service uses reusable trays and its produce waste is fed to on-site animals. Building occupants use water bottle filling stations and natural daylight is most often the primary source of lighting within classrooms. The school has led its district in composting and recycling practices. Junior Naturalist student leaders monitor and educate the school community about energy use, recycling, and care of school yard gardens and chickens.

Approximately 95 percent of the SEA population walks, bikes, buses, or carools to and from school each day. SEA ensures that vehicle loading and unloading occurs at least 25 feet from building air intakes, doors, and windows and that this space is staffed to ensure safety. Bus routes are electronically monitored and analyzed on a regular basis to determine efficiency changes. This includes sharing routes with a second elementary school.

SEA has worked to reestablish native plants, orchards, and gardens. SEA does not use irrigation on school grounds. Instead,

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## Keisha Davis, Osseo Area Public Schools, Selected NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal

Keisha Davis, assistant principal of Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts in the Osseo Area Public Schools district, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA), is Minnesota’s 2021 NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal. MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) present this prestigious award.

The National Outstanding Assistant Principal TM program was established in 2011 to honor assistant principals who are doing a superb job in their roles. NAESP is committed to preparing assistant principals to step into the principal role. This program promotes educational excellence for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade (PreK-8) schooling and calls attention to the fundamental importance of the assistant principal. NAESP will share their successes and best practices in a practical document for other principals to utilize.

“Keisha Davis is a true leader of her school in the areas of restorative practice and cultural responsiveness,” said Jason Luksik, chair of MESPA’s NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal selection committee. “It is evident in her practice that she helps students to find their voice and their purpose. Keisha is deserving of this award and will serve MESPA well in representing our members as the next Minnesota NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal.”

Jeff Zastrow, Principal at Fernbrook Elementary School and former Principal of Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts, recommended Davis highly for this honor. “Keisha is a tireless leader, daily looking for the best ways to support and influence staff.” Zastrow



said, “She seeks and delivers great professional development, holds a high standard for teacher performance with a racial/cultural equity lens at all time, and communicates clearly those expectations.”

Davis considers restorative practices to be one of her best methods as an educator. “These practices help those directly involved as well as those who were affected by an incident.” Davis said, “Restorative circles have been life-changing in my practice at our school. Scholars and staff alike comment on its power and request this process when incidents arise.” Davis explained that these practices impart a voice to those who are often not heard due to race, position, or other identities. As a result of restorative practice, the trajectory of scholars at Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts and their behavioral data have changed.

When asked to identify two of her most

**Continued on Page 18**

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it focuses on native habitat to balance soil biology, thus reducing the need for water. SEA features 1,600 square feet of native grasses and flowers that literally buzz with action throughout the summer and fall. Approximately 18 percent of the SEA schoolyard is devoted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR's) School Forest program, where students not only learn core content, but also sustainable forest management practices as they work alongside Minnesota DNR Foresters and Minnesota Conservation Corps members. SEA also partners with Hennepin County Forestry in the creation and management of a 30-fruit tree orchard located on school grounds.

In order to promote a healthy school culture, SEA encourages walking and biking as modes of transportation, trying new fruits and vegetables at lunch, encouraging healthy alternatives to celebrations, and participating in Farm to School programs. At least 50 percent of SEA students' annual P.E. takes place outdoors. SEA is home to an active Fuel Up to Play 60 student leadership group that advocates for in-school health and wellness by creating "Jammin' Minutes" videos on the morning 'news' show. Launched by the NFL, the National Dairy Council, and USDA, the Minnesota Vikings have been to SEA several times to celebrate SEA's successes with Fuel Up to Play 60. These awards have included a \$10,000 grant, being a dance competition winner, and recognition for a creative video focused on encouraging healthy eating habits.

SEA uses a coordinated school health approach to assist in promoting overall health issues. For example, fifth-grade students learn from the Golden Valley Police Department, who provide education promoting healthy living as well as information on chemical substances and advocacy to just say "no." All kindergarten students receive a free breakfast while all other students also have this as an option to start their day. The nurse promotes awareness of allergies within the building. Signs are posted outside of classrooms where students with severe allergies spend



time; tables are designated peanut-free in the cafeteria; and the cafeteria serves peanut-free, dairy-free, and gluten-free alternatives.

Students are acknowledged and celebrated weekly as a school community for exhibiting positive behaviors with themselves, toward others, and the world. Many teachers provide movement brain breaks every 15–30 minutes as well as teaching breathing techniques for calm and focus. A team comprised of administration, school nurse, social worker, psychiatrist, and staff meets weekly to discuss students, create a plan of evaluation or reevaluation for services, and/or develop plans of support for social/emotional, behavioral, and/or academic need. School climate is also enhanced through buddy classrooms, whereby each primary grade level classroom is paired with an intermediate grade classroom to participate in various activities.

SEA is located in a diverse and vibrant neighborhood that has fully embraced the school in multiple ways. Many retired neighbors volunteer during the school day in a variety of contexts. These neighbors support SEA school financially with donations as well as always keeping an eye on SEA's outdoor classrooms, gardens, orchard, and chickens. SEA participates in the neighborhood Pumpkin Festival by staffing a pumpkin education table with student Junior Naturalists, participating in the parade, and growing large pumpkins and tall sunflowers. SEA collaborates with a high school for older students to volunteer to teach scientific concepts in hands-on, applicable ways in a Seeds for Science program.

During their time at SEA, students learn from multiple environmental professionals, including Minnesota DNR Foresters, Fisheries, Invasive Specialists and Conservation Officers; National, State, and County Park Rangers, and Interpretive Naturalists; and numerous scientists and engineers with a broad array of green career focuses. These visitors contribute knowledge and experience in terms of careers, content, and context to real life, especially in terms of sustainability-focused careers and green technologies.

In addition to learning from professionals in environmental careers, students attend environmentally focused field trips multiple times each of their school years with rarely a repeat visit during their six-year tenure. Such locations include Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, where students studied locks, dams, and alternative energies; numerous Three River Parks; the arboretum; zoos; the Minnesota Twins Stadium green tour; the science museum; and Target headquarters. Whether it is at an environmental learning

center, a nearby wetland, a national park, or on school grounds, each interaction is unique and powerful for students.

Annually, outdoor, environmental, and sustainability education is part of the required staff professional development, thanks to such agencies as Minnesota DNR, Project Learning Tree, National Fisheries and Wildlife, and Three Rivers Park System, which focus on core content integration. Additionally, staff have facilitated professional development for others wanting more knowledge and experience on environmental and sustainability education at district and state trainings.

Teachers regularly teach required core content in math, language arts, music, art, physical education, and science outdoors. Students learn in the school's prairie, butterfly garden, greenhouse, vegetable gardens, and small school forest, officially known as the SEA-cret Forest per a partnership with the Minnesota DNR. Additionally, students help to raise, make observations, and collect data from animals, including chickens, tortoises, reptiles, a tarantula, and many fish, including 300 rainbow trout per funding from the DNR.

Regardless of the subject, the curricular formula focuses on students developing observations, from which wonders are formed, and, in turn, questions are derived. It is from these student-driven questions, combined with standards, that learning targets are

composed. Children learn about different types of pollution, climate change, and how choices as consumers and producers impact the earth. Students raise several hundred rainbow trout from hatch to release. They conduct investigations focusing on water quality with aquaponics.

SEA students participate in real science. Fourth graders volunteer with Hennepin County's River Watch program, collecting and reporting data from an adopted Creek twice annually. Kindergarten students plant tulips each fall and make observations each spring reporting data to a citizen science website. Students remind teachers and one another to conserve energy and to sort waste into compost, recycling, and trash.

Through all of this, the aim is to create children who are hope-filled, not hopeless, with regard to current and projected environmental challenges.

**Through all of this, the aim is to create children who are hope-filled, not hopeless, with regard to current and projected environmental challenges.**

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## The Academy for Sciences & Agriculture



*Stephanie Forliti*  
Marketing and Communications AFSA K-12

Inside the AFSA greenhouse the air is filled with the rich smell of soil just waiting to grow this season's bounty. Students are just returning to the building and beginning to prepare and plant for the thirteenth annual AFSA Plant Sale, the largest fundraiser for the school.

Agriculture is everywhere and it is the heart of AFSA K-12. Beginning in the younger grades, agriculture studies focuses on local agriculture, environmental stewardship, agriculture consumerism, and human impact. The 7-12 grade curriculum includes developing leadership skills and learning about career opportunities in five areas of AgriScience, including: Engineering; Animal Science; Plant

Science; Environmental Science; and Food Science. AFSA staff are all responsible for growing students' agricultural literacy by integrating agriculture topics into all classes and experiences.

Student's opportunities don't stop at the classroom door. They are exposed to a wide variety of content areas and unique experiences within hands-on and practical learning applications that go above and beyond a typical classroom setting. The high school's rooftop garden boasts raised bed planters built by AFSA's construction classes. The school's landscaping is done by the Landscaping class, and Floriculture class makes the boutonnières and centerpieces for special events. AFSA students take ownership of their school and design new clubs, activities, and propose school-wide changes.

Community is a big part of the AFSA culture. The school emphasizes family involvement, community support, and partnerships with agribusiness and educational organizations. Along with the plant sale comes the planting of the school's giving garden. Over the summer the produce from the garden is donated to local food shelves. Twice a year the student body goes out into the community to volunteer and help local agriculture related



businesses with a variety of projects. Our Farm and Community Service Days not only give our students service experience but hands on agricultural experience as well. Students help maintain city parks and rain gardens, prepare blueberry fields for the winter/summer, plant,

**Continued on Page 8**

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# M Agriculture at Milaca High School



*Doug Olson and Leann Pietrzak  
Milaca High School Agriculture Department  
Milaca Public Schools*

The Milaca Agriculture Department offers a wide range of classes to students in grades 7–12. Areas of study include plant science, animal science, natural resources, agricultural leadership, agricultural mechanics, and a junior high career and technical education rotation. The program has two full time instructors and is home to the Milaca FFA Chapter.

All seventh and all eighth-grade students spend one quarter of each year within the agriculture department, while also visiting FACS, Business, and Industrial Technology departments throughout the year. The primary focus of Agriculture 7 and 8 are agricultural literacy, as well as familiarizing students with the different learning spaces and elective topic areas that they have available to them in grades 9-12. Students interested in plant science can take Greenhouse Management, where students use the high school greenhouse to learn about plant parts and functions, environmental factors that influence plant growth, plant propagation, and gardening. In the spring of the year Greenhouse Management students tap trees for maple syrup production. Floral Design is another horticultural elective where students get experience with a wide variety of floral centerpieces, corsages, boutonnieres, bouquets, and hand tied balsam Christmas wreaths.

Students with natural resources interests participate in Wildlife and Wilderness, and Fish, Lakes, and Rivers. Each course is a semester in length, one focuses on the terrestrial world, the later in aquatics. Students can earn certification in two Minnesota DNR programs while in these courses. Wildlife and Wilderness provides an opportunity in Trappers Education, where students complete the classroom and field day requirements to enable them to purchase a Minnesota furbearer trapping license. On two different occasions the class has taken field trips to trap nuisance beaver on local landowner's property.

Fish, Lakes and Rivers students participate in the MN DNR Boater Safety Course, as well as learn about Minnesota biomes, watersheds, and fish species. Students construct custom made fishing poles in the class, a project that has been a great way to hook kids. The program also offers a class in taxidermy, where students gain experience preserving fish, mammals, and game birds. Milaca Schools has an 80 acre school forest that is utilized for outdoor education in these course areas. Agricultural Mechanics courses in Milaca include Welding, Advanced Metals, Small Engines, Advanced Power Mechanics, and Plumbing and Electricity. Milaca lab areas are recently renovated, and filled with some new state of the art equipment made possible by a voter approved referendum last November. The largest piece of new equipment includes a 4' x 8' metal plasma cutting table. The table installation was complete in January, and students are already designing projects in CAD and seeing them come to life on the plasma table. Milaca mechanics students participated in the Minnesota MTEEA Supermileage Challenge, where they design, construct, and modify a high mileage vehicle that competes with other schools in the State at the Brainerd International Speedway in May.

Other elective areas include Animal Science, Agricultural Leadership, and Work-based Learning: Diversified Occupations. Within Animal Science students learn about production animals as well as small animals. Curriculum is centered around production practices, so students have an understanding of how their food is raised. Agricultural Leadership was recently added to highlight the importance of leadership and communication skills, because there are many career opportunities within agribusiness. Students and businesses partner up within Diversified Occupations to employ students in a work-based setting. Students focus on improving their work environment skills through evaluations as well as plan and explore their post-secondary careers.

Funding is always a limiting factor in public education. The Milaca agriculture teachers have been successful in attaining some equipment and supplies through grant applications, including a \$4,500 grant from the Minnesota DNR for maple syrup equipment, and a \$3,000 grant from Compeer Financial for the purchase of a Mig Welder. The Milaca FFA was a recipient of a "Living to Serve" grant from the National FFA Organization for the purchase of storage crates for an annual food drive, as well as a MAELC Agricultural Literacy grant for banners and supplies for learning stations at a community "Breakfast on the Farm" event.

In addition to opportunities within the walls of the school, a major focus of the program is to get students out into the community and industry to observe firsthand career opportunities, as well as post-secondary program options. Annual field trips include college campus tours, and an industry focus that changes each year hoping that if a student enters the agricultural program in ninth grade, that they could leave as a senior



who has visited at least four different post-secondary programs and industry tours.

With the wide range of agricultural education elective courses available to students in Milaca, the doors of the classrooms and labs are always rotating. The success of the program can be largely credited to strong partnerships and communication between instructors, students, school administrators, and the community.

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## The Academy for Sciences & Agriculture Continued from Page 5



harvest, and package fresh produce. Helping in the community helps build the family environment AFSA is known for.

Agriculture opportunities for students

continue with AFSA's FFA affiliation. All students in grades 7-12 are members of the local, state, and national FFA Organization making AFSA the largest FFA Chapter in Minnesota. The partnership with the FFA allows the school to provide additional opportunities such as CDE's (Career Development Events), SAE's (Supervised Agricultural Experiences), and the AgriScience fair. AFSA's FFA Alumni coordinates a Potato Hug each fall which not only serves as a fundraiser, but it is primarily a chance for students to sell wares that they have produced during their SAE. Students have a chance to truly experience being an entrepreneur.

Agriculture is the foundation of everything AFSA. From the youngest grades to our

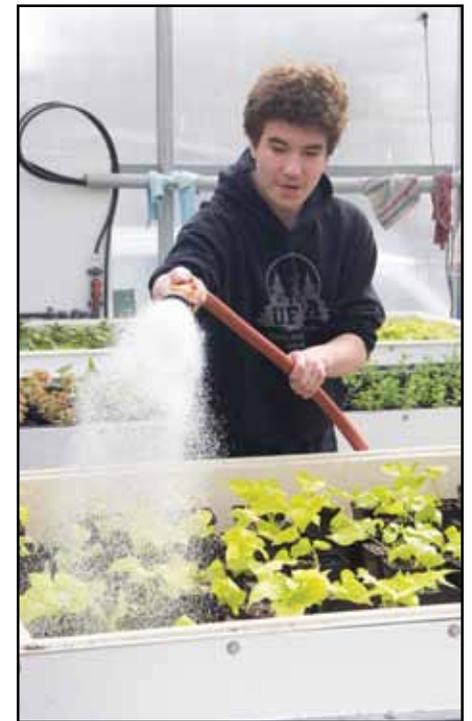
graduates AFSA K-12 is bringing agriculture to urban and suburban communities. For more information about AFSA K-12 and our Annual Plant sale please go to our website [www.afsa-highschool.com](http://www.afsa-highschool.com).

*The Academy for Sciences & Agriculture (AFSA) engages learners in academically rigorous,*

*student-centered learning experiences and leadership opportunities within a science and agricultural context. AFSA brings agricultural literacy to urban and suburban populations.*

*This K-12 public charter school was founded by the Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC) in 2001. AFSA began as a 9th-12th grade high school with 41 students. Currently over 425 students are enrolled and the school will grow to about 600 students over the next three years. AFSA's locations, in Vadnais Heights and Little Canada, allow inclusion of students from all north/east Twin Cities areas. Currently students from 19 different school districts attend AFSA.*

*AFSA K-12 prepares students to be wise consumers, savvy decision makers, and successful, career-oriented lifelong learners. The unique curriculum with hands-on and experiential learning drives the success of the*



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## Solway Elementary School Gardens



*Brian Stefanich  
Solway Elementary Principal  
Bemidji Career Academies Director  
Bemidji Area Schools*

Bemidji Area Schools received 50 Eco Garden Bed Systems from Eco Gardens, LLC two years ago free of charge. Our Solway Elementary School was fortunate to receive 8 of the beds for teaching outdoor horticulture education in the spring of 2020 as our schools were going to distant learning due to COVID-19. Principal, Brian Stefanich, and teachers Rich Morehouse, Tim Slough and Nate Blumhagen and custodian, Roger Pederson, assembled the garden beds and constructed our gardens on our school property. Our classroom teachers and staff each chose a bed to call their own in the spring and summer of 2020 to pilot and learn the ins and outs of the Eco Garden Bed systems.

We are a K-3 elementary school located in Solway, MN and we have a garden bed for each classroom. We work closely with Ann Marie Ward, the Executive Director of Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and Sarah Kuschel, Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Regional Curriculum Specialist. They offer amazing hands-on curriculum materials for our teachers. We are excited for the upcoming planting season to begin for our students and teachers to begin to see the fruits of their labor as their gardens grow.

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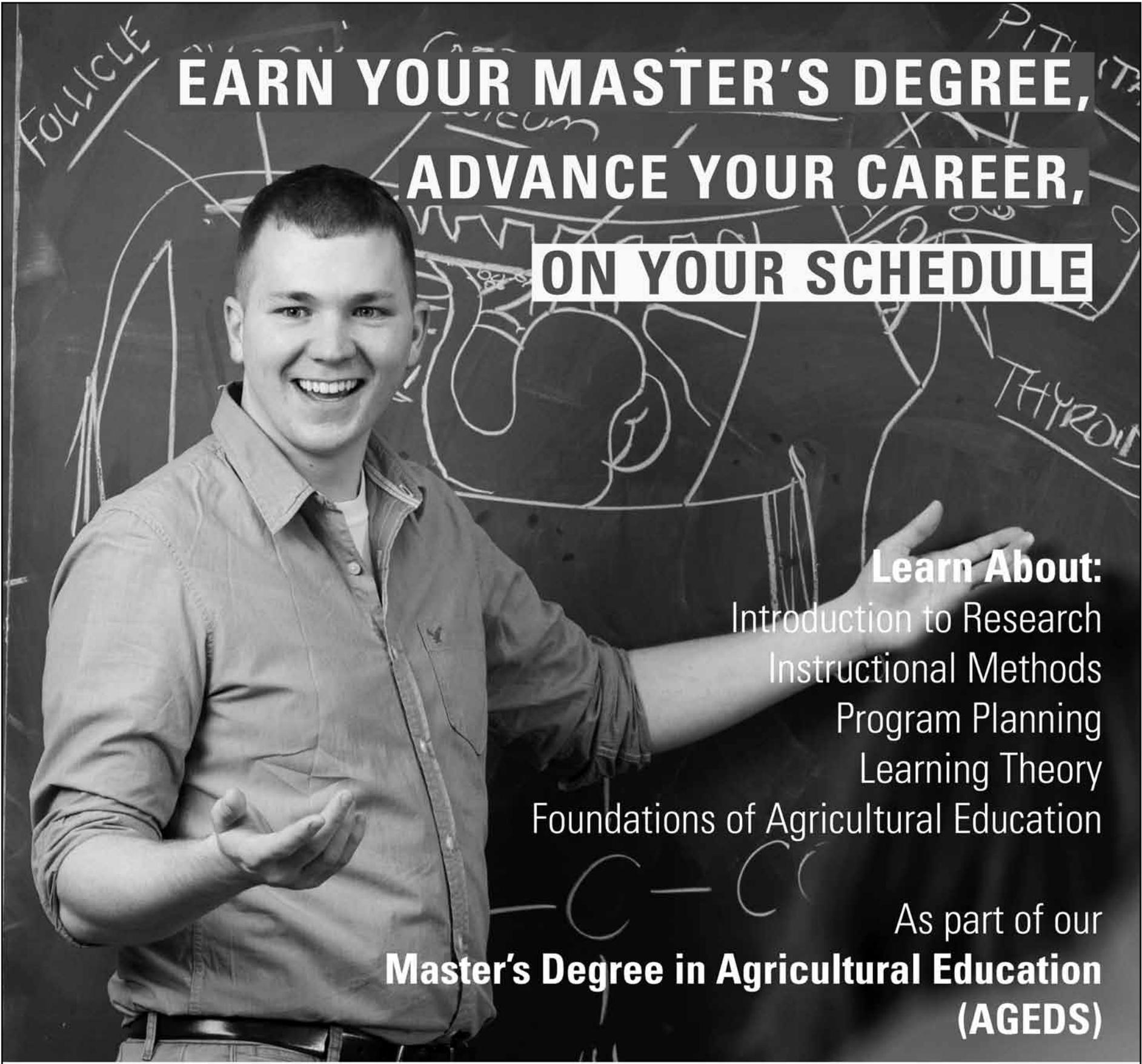
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## Bemidji Construction Trades Academy



Brian Stefanich  
Solway Elementary Principal  
Bemidji Career Academies Director  
Bemidji Area Schools

We currently have 40 Bemidji High School students in grades 9-12 in the Construction Trades Academy. Our students have a variety of opportunities that include exploring the construction careers within the trades through job shadowing, attending exploring post opportunities, classes, and even paid internships.

Our community partners not only sponsor the academy of their choice but they open their doors for our students to tour, job shadow, intern and volunteer on site to explore a possible career in that area. The Construction Trades Academy partners with Northwest Technical College (NTC), Kraus-Anderson, Construction Engineers, Hills Plumbing and Heating, Naylor Refrigeration and Higgen's Heating. We also have a strong partnership with our local Boy Scouts of America Exploring Program. The Exploring Program directors work with our Bemidji Career Academy partners to create Exploring posts. The posts meet once or twice a month on site to provide interactive activities that help our academy students explore, pursue and develop their special interests with

our community professionals while still in high school. Together, we are equipping young people with character, leadership skills, and life skills that can be used today and in their futures at no cost to our students.

Bemidji High School Construction Trades instructor, Tony Hommes, partners with Headwaters Regional Development Commission (HRDC) which is a regional planning and development organization that serves local governments, development organizations, community leaders and others in a five county area. Bemidji High School is responsible for our instructor, Tony Hommes, who also has his contractor license, and students in our Advanced Construction, Construction Technology I and Construction for Women courses. Pre-COVID, our Construction trades students' real work experience was being on the building site each day for 60 minutes building 3 and 4 bedroom homes. For the second straight year, our Advanced Construction students are at Northwest Technical College one day each week earning credits in the College Introduction to Plumbing/HVAC course.

We have needed to adapt this year with the COVID 19 pandemic. We currently have 23 students in the construction trades advanced courses this year. Since we are not building a home off campus this year due to our students being in Hybrid or Distant Learning most of the year, we are currently doing a remodel project with Beltrami County Housing Rehabilitation Authority (HRA). This is also the first year that we started the new advanced cabinetry class at Bemidji High School and our students are building the cabinets that are going into the remodel project. The future plans are to have that same cabinetry class build the cabinets for the houses that we build every year.

Construction Trades Career Academy: The Construction Trades Career Academy is a competency based training program designed to assure graduating students have demonstrated knowledge and skills essential to perform basic skills in the construction workplace. The Academy will prepare students for jobs which require constructional skills including: woodworking, basic rough framing, roofing, basic drywall installation, and working from



a set of blueprints. The Construction Trades Academy training will prepare graduates to enter the building trades sector in positions such as: carpenter, carpenter helper, drywall installer, roofer, mason assistant, cabinet maker assistant, landscape worker, and painter. The combination of skills gained through this training is highly transferable to construction trades jobs in many sectors of the economy.

GO TIGERS & GO JACKS!

*"Do right. Do your best. Treat others as you want to be treated."*

—Lou Holtz

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## Educators Support Career Pathways for Students to Build a Solid Future at White Bear Lake H.S.



Have you ever caught a student not paying attention in class? Maybe dozing off, chatting with another student, or taking glances at their cell phone?

Well, if you're looking for a solution, you might want to consider the experience of Dan Rossiter, a construction teacher at White Bear Lake Area High School.

"I can't say I have that problem," said Rossiter. "Most days my students are trying to keep up with me in the woodshop."

Rossiter has spent 27 years serving White Bear Lake Area High School where he mentors students interested in pursuing a career in the construction trades and advocates for skilled-work training and apprenticeship program opportunities.

White Bear Lake Area High School students can enroll in Career Pathways courses, learn industry-specific skills and, in some courses, earn college credit, free of charge, as well as industry-recognized credentials.

"We are evolving our courses to fit the interests of students and meet the needs of Minnesota's future workforce," Rossiter said. "We often partner with Construction Career Pathways and its website, construc-

tioncareers.org, for career information and extracurricular activities that students can participate in throughout the school year to supplement their training."

The Twin Cities-based nonprofit Construction Careers Foundation supports Minnesota Educators such as Dan Rossiter with construction career resources and connections that they, in turn, can use to inspire and prepare Minnesota's next generation of construction professionals.

At White Bear Lake Area High School, students who participate in the school's construction trades program develop essential skills and experiences needed to either enter the workforce directly with a high-paying career or further their post-secondary education.

For example, students practice measuring and reading fractions, understanding hand and power tool safety, and learn how to use these skills to build a woodworking project. They also learn to read blueprints, design a floor plan and even work toward earning an OSHA 10 safety certification in construction.

"Working directly with educators at White Bear Lake Area High School and



Rossiter also mentors young people through Construction Career Pathways' Minnesota Trades Academy summer program. Students earn a wage while practicing construction apprenticeship skills and complete a variety of projects over the summer. (Photo Credit: WBLAHS, taken before COVID regulations in summer 2019.)

building the skills of students lays the foundation for students to excel in life beyond graduation, whether through continued education or a meaningful career in construction," said Sarah Lechowich senior director for the Construction Careers Foundation, which oversees the Construction Career Pathways statewide initiative.

"Students aren't sitting stagnant in a classroom," Lechowich added. "Rather, they are engaging in hands-on classroom and field experiences, connecting with local industry professionals, touring local businesses, and other experiential learning opportunities."

Rossiter mentors his students to explore their options and follow their passion after graduation. After all, there are more than 30 construction apprenticeship programs in Minnesota alone. Free mobile apps such as CCP's Construction Trades serve as a great resource for students to explore careers, understand benefits and watch video advice from professionals in the field.

"I tell my students if you think you are not ready for, or not interested, in going to college and serving in the military isn't right for you, then give the construction trades a trial run," Rossiter said. "Students under-

stand debt builds quickly and when they compare college expenses to the high wages and benefits they can earn right away through an apprenticeship, many want to dive deeper and see which construction career paths best match their interests."

Rossiter's students gravitate toward his positive attitude and interactive projects, but they often stay in touch with him after they graduate because he speaks from experience.

"I started in the construction trades when I was 16 as a shop hand helping around job sites and by 18, I was a laborer with a concrete crew," Rossiter said. "I take pride in making sure my students build real-world connections while in school and showing them that the skills they practice in my class can put them on the fast track to a successful career right after graduation."

Courtesy of Construction Careers Pathways: <https://constructioncareers.org>

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## The Carpentry Program at STEP High School



*Tim Nestrudm Carpentry Teacher  
STEP High School  
Anoka-Hennepin School District*

What started out as a home improvement class in 1992 grew into the Carpentry program at Blaine High School. In 1992-93, we built fences and finished bedrooms for people in the community. The class was a success but I felt students were not getting the complete experience of building a house so in the fall

of 1996 we started to build our first house. We built the house right behind the school with the buyer to move the house to their location. Our first house was a 24' x 48', 3 bedroom rambler that changed into a 24' x 48' with a 2 car attached garage. We partnered with the Anoka Community Action Program to provide affordable housing for 3 years. When their vision changed, we began building a 26' x 52', 3 bedroom rambler and that is what we build

currently. The program was moved to STEP High School in 2019. This move allowed all students from all five high schools in the Anoka Hennepin School District to attend this class.

Each year we start the process with the students giving input on how the house should look like. The footprint size and the number of exterior windows and doors are the same each year but the finishing touches usually change with the current trends and interior walls are adjusted to fit the class's vision. It's important for the students to have ownership in the house. My class is about real-world experience. Whether they go into construction or not, I want them to have these skills and be able to do things for themselves.

Students start in the first trimester of each year with framing the floor, exterior walls, roof, shingles, house wrap and installing the exterior doors and windows. In trimester two, we finish framing the interior walls, rough-in electrical (with the help of Kurt Breeze), insulate the walls, install the vapor barrier and hang the drywall. The rough in plumbing is done by a local plumbing company. Over Spring break Advanced Drywall comes in to tape, mud and finish the drywall. Trimester three starts with painting, hanging interior doors, installing cabinets, interior trim, flooring, finish electrical and plumbing, and siding the exterior. The



house is "turn-key" when the year ends.

I keep current on what students will use if they decide to go into the field of construction. Students will swing the hammer and use the nail guns. Our power tools have gone from plug in style to cordless tools. There have been some great advancements in tools over the years. There have been many changes on how a house is constructed too. Improvements in materials and installation/construction practices has gotten better with time.

Each year, once the cost has been determined, we place it on public auction with a minimum bid and the highest bidder gets the house!

This past year has been the only year we didn't build a house since 1995. I have the stu-

**Continued on Page 14**

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### CONTACT & QUESTIONS:

Stephanie Menning | 651-288-3422 | [stephaniem@muca.org](mailto:stephaniem@muca.org)  
Kari Steinbrecher | 763-200-4206 | [kari@steinbrechercompanies.com](mailto:kari@steinbrechercompanies.com)



# K Construction Technology Class at Kasson-Mantorville High School



Aaron Davis  
Industrial Technology Instructor  
Kasson-Mantorville High School

What comes to mind when you think about a high school classroom? Four walls, desks, and a whiteboard? For students in the Construction Technology class at Kasson-Mantorville High School, it could mean 80 degrees and sun or 5 degrees and 20 mile per hour winds; and that's just the weather. The classroom they learn in is something they construct together and alongside community supporters. Their classroom is a residential construction site.

Each year students in the Construction Technology class at Kasson-Mantorville High School build a house on a lot purchased by the district. Students begin their learning journey by framing the entire house on a foundation built by a subcontractor. Students then continue with the installation of windows and doors, insulation, drywall, and

siding. Throughout the process, students learn skills which include tool and worksite safety, measuring, blueprint reading, issues facing contractors, and information about utilities. In addition to construction-based skills, students are learning to simply be good human beings in the workplace. Using effective communication skills is essential in making sure everyone is working together throughout the home building process. Students are having to communicate to ensure that the work is done in a high quality manner because the house needs to be ready to sell once the final touches have been made. Organizational skills are at the top of the development list as well so that everyone is working together, and so that subcontractors have the time and space to complete their specific work to ensure the utilities are ready.

While students are engaging in real-life experience and developing skills working at the house site, they also get career exposure by having an opportunity each quarter to participate in a job shadow day. The program

has partnered with Rochester Area Builders (RAB) to give students the opportunity to experience what a "day-in-the-life" is like in a career they are interested in. With over five hundred members, RAB has a great pool of employers to pick from so that students are able to learn about the career, make connections and possibly create a path to a career after graduation. Students are not required to solely shadow careers in the construction industry. In addition to shadowing contractors, electricians and excavators, students have also had the opportunity to shadow bankers, financial advisors and even a catering service.

The 2020-21 school year brought about challenges that were unique to the program. The COVID pandemic had the program facing the challenges of all students in school but having to wear masks and social distance; to moving to a hybrid model halfway through the first quarter with half the students in school and half learning at home; and then back to a model with all students back in school. In the hybrid model, students at school would be working at the construction site while students at home would be studying and completing work that was preparing them for coming to the construction site the next day.

Aside from wearing masks, students have enjoyed getting out to the construction site and participating in "normal" Kasson-Mantorville Construction Technology activities. While the pandemic was keeping students and teachers from completing a lot of their normal routines, students and teachers in the Construction Tech program were able to do what they always do, with just a few tweaks.



The house construction project for this year is scheduled to be completed by the summer and another project will be getting underway in time for the 2021-22 school year.

The program was started in 1993 by industrial technology instructor, Phil Johnson. The first house sites were on lots across the street from the school so that students could carry all the tools that would be needed from the school to the worksite each day. Since then, a trailer has been purchased to carry tools and equipment, with building sites always staying in Kasson near the school. After Johnson retired, the program was continued by current home builder, Tony Paulson and then taken over by the current instructor, Aaron Davis. Each of these instructional leaders have brought something unique and special to the learning environment, and have built a program that is something our entire district and community is thankful for and takes great pride in.

[www.komets.k12.mn.us](http://www.komets.k12.mn.us)  
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## The Carpentry Program at STEP High School

Continued from Page 13

dents who work on the house sign a hardhat each year, I have 25 hats filled with signatures and one that has the word Covid on it (I hope that will be the only hardhat on my wall that isn't signed). This past year students had to settle for "virtually" building a house, a sad substitute but the best we could do. If students take all three semesters of Carpentry in a "normal" school year they really get the overall picture of house construction. We cover everything from construction practices, to tool safety, to materials, to work ethic.

### Student quote from Kendra Entsminger

Some of my best high school memories were made in Mr. Nestrud's (nesty) carpentry class. One of my biggest takeaways was "The attitude that you bring to the house is the quality of work you will produce". Nesty

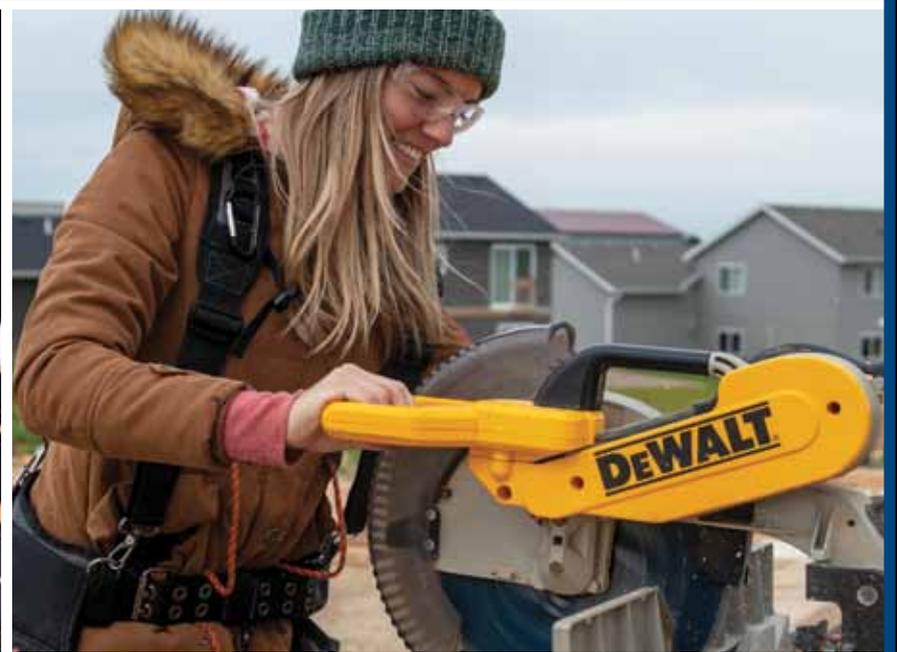
always said "never say it's good enough" which is something I will take to all aspects of life. I learned how to layout walls and trusses, sheet and shingle a roof, set windows, drywall and mud, the list could go on and on. I learned more than I could ever fit into a paragraph and I am thankful for the class and all it has to offer. I also want to say that Nesty made my high school years memorable and fun. I am going to miss him after I graduate but I have a headful of memories I will forever cherish.

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## “Tiger Build” at Technical High School in St. Cloud



Jessica Dahl  
Central Minnesota Habitat for Humanity

At Technical High School in St. Cloud, MN, the upper level of a Habitat for Humanity family's future home is built by students and teachers each year. The project, named Tiger Build after the school's mascot, is a community affair. High school students gain valuable construction skills framing, siding, roofing, and trimming the home. Post-secondary students from an area technical and community college complete the plumbing and electrical installations.

Local companies and organizations donate money, materials, training time, and tools. The City of St. Cloud and the St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority assist with funding for lots. At the end of the school year, the home is moved from the school's parking lot to its permanent site and a team of volunteers goes to work finishing the basement level and creating a welcoming yard for the future homeowners to enjoy.

The 2020–2021 school year marks the sixth build for the school. The fifth

build was cut short by COVID-19 school closures in March 2020. This year, instructor Brad Salvesson and Leah Sams, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Career and Technical Education Programming, arranged for the students to continue working outside on the build despite the school building closing periodically. As a result, the students were able to continue their hands on education and a sixth family will be served by their dedication and hard work. At the most recent home dedication, Sams expressed what this means for the students. “[Tiger Build] blesses our students with real, practical job skills that they learn making this house.”

*“It’s a blessing to be part of – you get to help someone out. Also, it’s great for experience; to learn and further our skills. And now I can see [the house] in the community, too, when I drive by.” – Elliot (student)*

The success of the Tiger Build program has resulted in partnerships starting with two more local high schools in the 2021–2022 school year; Sartell-St. Stephen and Rocori.

Central Minnesota Habitat for Humanity serves low-income individuals and families who demonstrate a need for safe, decent and affordable housing. These school partnerships help provide a “hand up” and



meet the growing demand for affordable housing in the area. Homeownership through Habitat has several benefits — homeowners are happier, healthier, more educated and feel better about their futures. If your school is interested in a similar partnership, find your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate at <https://hfhmn.org/find-your-local-habitat>.

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## CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION

### Construction Laborers

Perform tasks involving physical labor at construction sites. May operate hand and power tools of all types: air hammers, earth tampers, cement mixers, small mechanical hoists, surveying and measuring equipment, and a variety of other equipment and instruments. May clean and prepare sites, dig trenches, set braces to support the sides of excavations, erect scaffolding, and clean up rubble, debris and other waste materials. May assist other craft workers.

**Median wage (2016)** \$16.07 hourly, \$33,430 annual

### Construction Managers

Plan, direct, or coordinate, usually through subordinate supervisory personnel, activities concerned with the construction and maintenance of structures, facilities, and systems. Participate in the conceptual development of a construction project and oversee its organization, scheduling, budgeting, and implementation. Includes managers in specialized construction fields, such as carpentry or plumbing.

**Median wage (2016)** \$42.93 hourly, \$89,300 annual

### Construction & Building Inspectors

Inspect structures using engineering skills to determine structural soundness and compli-

ance with specifications, building codes, and other regulations. Inspections may be general in nature or may be limited to a specific area, such as electrical systems or plumbing.

**Median wage (2016)** \$28.12 hourly, \$58,480 annual

### Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Operators

Operate one or several types of power construction equipment, such as motor graders, bulldozers, scrapers, compressors, pumps, derricks, shovels, tractors, or front-end loaders to excavate, move, and grade earth, erect structures, or pour concrete or other hard surface pavement. May repair and maintain equipment in addition to other duties.

**Median wage (2016)** \$22.06 hourly, \$45,890 annual

### Civil Engineers

Perform engineering duties in planning, designing, and overseeing construction and maintenance of building structures, and facilities, such as roads, railroads, airports, bridges, harbors, channels, dams, irrigation projects, pipelines, power plants, and water and sewage systems.

**Median wage (2016)** \$40.16 hourly, \$83,540 annual

### Construction Carpenters

Construct, erect, install, and repair structures and fixtures of wood, plywood, and wallboard, using carpenter's hand tools and power tools.

**Median wage (2016)** \$20.96 hourly, \$43,600 annual

### Cost Estimators

Prepare cost estimates for product manufacturing, construction projects, or services to aid management in bidding on or determining price of product or service. May specialize according to particular service performed or type of product manufactured.

**Median wage (2016)** \$29.71 hourly, \$61,790 annual

### Cement Masons & Concrete Finishers

Smooth and finish surfaces of poured concrete, such as floors, walks, sidewalks, roads, or curbs using a variety of hand and power tools. Align forms for sidewalks, curbs, or gutters; patch voids; and use saws to cut expansion joints.

**Median wage (2016)** \$18.84 hourly, \$39,180 annual

### Electricians

Install, maintain, and repair electrical wiring, equipment, and fixtures. Ensure that

work is in accordance with relevant codes. May install or service street lights, intercom systems, or electrical control systems.

**Median wage (2016)** \$25.35 hourly, \$52,720 annual

### Plumbers

Assemble, install, or repair pipes, fittings, or fixtures of heating, water, or drainage systems, according to specifications or plumbing codes.

**Median wage (2016)** \$24.74 hourly, \$51,450 annual

### Architects

Plan and design structures, such as private residences, office buildings, theaters, factories, and other structural property.

**Median wage (2016)** \$36.99 hourly, \$76,930 annual

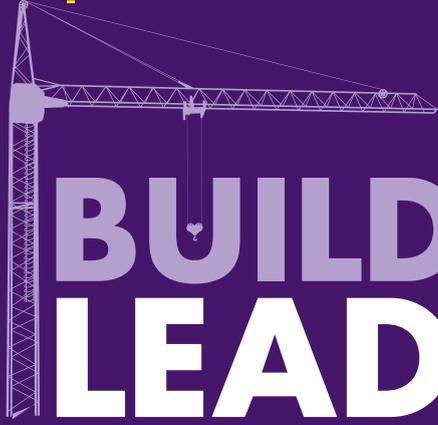
### Heating and Air Conditioning Mechanics & Installers

Install, service, or repair heating and air conditioning systems in residences or commercial establishments.

**Median wage (2016)** \$22.07 hourly, \$45,910 annual

Source: O\*NET

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## Teacher of the Year Candidate Field Narrowed to 25 Semifinalists

The field of possible candidates for this year's Minnesota Teacher of the Year honor has been narrowed to 25. A selection panel of 25 community leaders chose the semifinalists from an initial field of 75 candidates from across the state.

The panel will review the semifinalists' portfolios again, along with semifinalist video submissions, in late March and will select up to 10 finalists from among the group. The current Minnesota Teacher of the Year, Qorsho Hassan from Echo Park Elementary in District 196, will announce her successor at the Minnesota

Teacher of the Year ceremony later this year. Because of safety precautions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota Teacher of the Year ceremony, originally scheduled for May 2 at the Saint Paul RiverCentre, will be postponed until further notice.

Education Minnesota, the statewide educators union, organizes and underwrites the Teacher of the Year program. Candidates include pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade, Early Childhood Family Education and Adult Basic Education teachers, from public or private schools.

# 2021 Minnesota TEACHER of the YEAR

57th Anniversary



Semifinalists for 2021 Minnesota Teacher of the Year are listed below, including the district, school, subject area and grade taught:

**Layne Bell**, Hopkins Public Schools, Hopkins High School, English language arts, grades 9–12

**Natalia Benjamin**, Rochester Public Schools, Century High School, English language and ethnic studies, grades 9–12

**Wright Braudt**, Southwest Metro Intermediate District 288, SW Metro Career and Technical Education, photography and graphic design, secondary

**David Davis**, Minnetonka Public Schools, Clear Springs Elementary, instrumental music, grades K–5

**Christie Dunkley**, Pine City Public Schools, Pine City High School, Spanish, grades 9–12

**Kim Marty-Goblirsch**, Medford Public Schools, Medford High School, language arts, grades 9–12

**Jillian Goods**, South Washington County Schools, Park High School, English, grade 9

**Robyn Hassani**, Stillwater Area Public Schools, Andersen Elementary School, elementary education, grade 1

**Beth Hausladen**, Westonka Public Schools, Shirley Hills Primary School, elementary education, Kindergarten

**John Horton**, Saint Paul Public Schools, J.J. Hill Montessori School, elementary education, grades 1–3

**Todd Hunter**, Anoka-Hennepin School District, Anoka High School, science, grades 10–12

**Nicholas Hupton**, Bloomington Public Schools, Bloomington Jefferson High School, English, grades 9–11

**Stuart Darnell Keroff**, Aspen Academy charter school (Savage, Minn.), social studies, grades 5–6

**Robert Kohnert**, Minneapolis Public Schools, Southwest High School, social studies, grades 10–11

**Scott Kummrow**, Fergus Falls Public Schools, Fergus Falls High School and Fergus Falls ALC, music, grades 5–12

**Eugenia Popa**, Saint Paul Public Schools, Harding Senior High School, ESL, grades 9–12

**France Roberts**, Wayzata Public Schools, Meadow Ridge Elementary School, elementary education, grade 1

**Kathy Romero**, Saint Paul Public Schools, Como Park Senior High School, English, grades 9–12

**Lauren Scherer**, Eden Prairie Schools, Central Middle School, math and science, grade 7

**Sandra Stephens**, South Washington County Schools, Nuevas Fronteras Spanish Immersion, elementary education, kindergarten

**Jessica Stewart**, Osseo Area Schools, Osseo Senior High School, social studies, grades 9–12

**Kathryn Tabke**, Shakopee Public Schools, Shakopee High School, English, grades 11–12

**Jamie Weisz**, Anoka-Hennepin School District, Champlin Park High School, math, grades 9–11

**Lauren Wheeler**, Minneapolis Public Schools, Thomas Edison High School, fitness for life/health, grades 9–12

**Shawna Wilson**, Shakopee Public Schools, Shakopee High School, family and consumer science, grades 10–12

**For more information contact:**

**Doug Dooher**  
651-292-4820 (work)  
651-245-6141 (cell)

**Chris Williams**  
651-292-4816 (work)  
651-247-5539 (cell)

*Courtesy of a press release from Education Minnesota*

## Keisha Davis Selected NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal Continued from Page 1

significant accomplishments as an Assistant Principal she indicated her efforts to make culturally responsive books more accessible, and lowering office referrals for students, especially students of color. Davis created an area in the school library dedicated to books that reflect Birch Grove's scholars. Davis has also sustained BG Family Book Club Night, a practice that was initially grant funded and created by two staff members who are no longer with Birch Grove Elementary. Although the teachers and grant are gone, Davis believes the practice is too important to stop.

"She invited community leaders to come and read the book of the night. This brought together elected officials and the people they represent," said Dr. Ronald Salazar, Principal at Birch Grove Elementary School. Dr. Salazar emphasized that Davis "walks the talk" when it comes to equity for their school. "Equity is more than a slogan to her. Her daily walk is empowering families, staff and students so our scholars can reach for the stars, create wonderful things, and have what it takes to overcome centuries of discrimination."

Prior to being named NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal from Minnesota, Davis

was awarded the Certificate of Investment to the Betterment of Education by the Osseo Area Public Schools District in 2010, and Teacher of the Year by Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society through her alma mater in 2011. Following completion of her bachelor's, Davis received her master's degree and her administrative degree. She has been an educator since 2004 and has been Assistant Principal at Birch Grove Elementary School for the Arts since 2015.

"I am honored and humbled to be named NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal from Minnesota," said Davis. "I want to thank God, my family, friends, colleagues and all of the scholars who have allowed me to live out my life's purpose of equity in education. I share this recognition with you all!"

*Courtesy of MESPA*

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– **Sarah Fredricks**, 6th grade science teacher,  
Cheney Middle School, West Fargo, N.D.

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## Robbinsdale Teacher Named Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs Staff Member of the Year



*Robbinsdale Area Schools*

Linda Valentine, a graphics instructor at Robbinsdale Academy–Highview, in Golden Valley, has been named staff member of the year by the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs (MAAP).

The award honors teachers who support MAAP's mission to lead, promote and support innovative learning experiences for all Minnesota students while also volunteering with the organization.

"It's nice to be recognized but there are always people doing great work that never get recognized," a modest Valentine said about the award. "Having a student say thank you, or having students say that you have impacted their lives means (a lot) more."

Valentine, who has been a teacher at Robbinsdale Academy–Highview since 2008, said she's passionate about making a difference for students, whether it's teaching new skills, or extending a helping hand or shoulder

to cry on. "I want our students to have a rich, fulfilling life and I try to help them down that path," she said.

Toni Boyden, principal at Highview, said Valentine is the heart of the school, and deserving of the recognition.

"Linda has given her soul to teaching and maintains high standards and integrity in her work with our students," said Boyden. "She has dedicated her skill set and time to MAAP, fostering their mission to lead, promote and support innovative learning experiences for students attending alternative programs."

Valentine was formally recognized by the Robbinsdale Area School Board at its Feb. 1, 2021, business meeting, where Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephanie Burrage encouraged directors to check her out in action. "If you have never been to her classroom then you're missing out on a treat," said Dr. Burrage. "She is just awesome."

As a teacher at Highview, Valentine has been active with MAAP and its STARS program, which is a student organization she helped bring to the school. Students who are part of the organization develop employment, academic and social skills; engage in a number of career-related activities; and

participate in events each year. One of those events — the Northwest Metro Regional Conference — is something Valentine has helped organize, from start to finish, for 12 years.

"I am a worker bee who is committed to student opportunities and success," she said.

Valentine is also known as an advocate for women in the workforce, women's equality and career and technical education (CTE) programming — all things Boyden says she brings to her valuable role at Highview. And if all that wasn't enough, Valentine is also an instructor at a local technical college.

Robbinsdale Academy–Highview offers a full high school curriculum in an alternative setting. The school offers a more personal environment for students who prefer a smaller learning environment. Students have individualized, self-paced work, and opportunities for success through flexibility and choices.

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## Blaine High School's Sue Zemlin named Music Teacher of the Year



*Anoka-Hennepin Schools*

Longtime music teacher, Sue Zemlin, was named Music Educator of the Year by the Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA). She has been director of vocal music at Blaine High School - Center for Engineering, Mathematics and Science (BHS) since 1992. Each year many teachers are nominated by their peers and colleagues to receive this high honor. When selecting her this year, MMEA acknowledged Zemlin's undying devotion to students, innovative and adaptive rehearsal strategies, and her resiliency.

"It is very kind of colleagues and former students to nominate me for this honor," said Zemlin. "Music education is a collaborative profession. My colleagues and students make

me a better teacher and a better person every day. I gratefully share this honor with each of them."

Zemlin is currently the music department leader at BHS and teaches several curricular and extracurricular choirs. She also assists with the annual madrigal dinner, helps write music curriculum for the district, and has been active on the National Honor Society Faculty Council, the Personnel, Staff-Development, Finance, TEDx, and Teacher Leadership Committees, and SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity).

"I am lucky to be in a profession that provides constant growth, curiosity, and creativity. Music education is vital to the growth of every human being," said Zemlin. She credits the schools she attended for encouraging and developing her passion for music along with her academic strengths.

"As we move forward from this unusual year, I encourage Anoka-Hennepin to do the same for this and future generations of students. I thank every music educator in Minnesota for their creative, tireless work to keep music a part of students' lives in a global pandemic. The award belongs to all of us this year."

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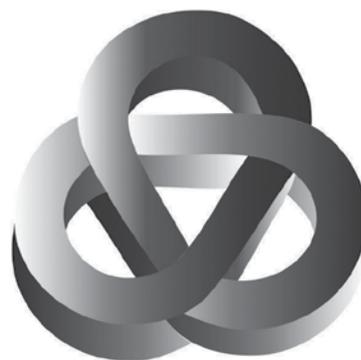
## WEM Outstanding Educator Awards

Educators are first nominated for the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program by students, parents, colleagues or community members. Those who accept the nomination provide additional information for consideration by Synergy & Leadership Exchange and a blue ribbon selection panel, which reviews and ranks the nominees.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development

of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities. For more information on the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program and Synergy & Leadership Exchange, visit [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org).

*Courtesy of Synergy & Leadership Exchange press releases*



Synergy & Leadership  
Exchange

## Wayzata Teacher Named Honoree in Outstanding Educator Program



Amanda Laden, a teacher at Wayzata High School in Wayzata Public Schools was a recipient of a 2020 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Laden was honored with an Academic Challenge Coach Award, which recognizes teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges approved by the Minnesota Academic League Council.

Laden has been teaching and coaching for 21 years and currently teaches Biology and Human Anatomy. In addition to teaching, Laden coaches Science Bowl. Laden led the Wayzata Science Bowl team to the 2019 National Championship in Washington D.C., competing against and defeating schools from all over the country. Laden works hard to create an environment of inclusion, finding ways for all students to be involved without competing directly. Some students keep score, others help with evaluations or setting up for

the Invitational. This has enabled a record number of students to participate in Science Bowl, continue learning science and contribute to the team. Laden says, "Sometimes just being able to be around others who love science is all it takes to make a club welcoming and strong."

"Students know that Laden cares deeply about each of them on a personal level," shares a colleague. "She actively reaches out to families and school staff to learn about unique characteristics of her students, including cultural and family backgrounds, personal interests, and special needs. She then uses that knowledge to design highly relevant and interesting classroom activities that give students a voice in their own education."

Additionally, Laden also runs Honors Mentor Connection class (a year-round research-for-credit

course for upperclassmen) where she teaches crucial career skills such as conducting informational interviews, writing formal messages, and composing professional reports.

"She refuses to accept the status quo and is constantly and actively working to make Wayzata High School better for all," said associate principal, Greg Sowden. "This effort and drive reveals itself professionally and reflects tremendous spirit. The students and staff with whom Amanda has associated with are better as a result of knowing her."

[www.wayzataschools.org](http://www.wayzataschools.org)  
(763) 745-5000



## Thief River Falls Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence



Darcy Reese, a teacher at both Lincoln High School and Franklin Middle School in Thief River Falls, was a recipient of a state 2020 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Reese is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. She is one of two recipients of the Ethics in Education Award, which recognizes educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum.

Reese has been teaching for 33 years and currently teaches vocal music to students in grades 6-12. One unique part of her music curriculum is inviting the Patrick Henry High School choir from North Minneapolis to collaborate with her choir to tackle the subject of breaking barriers. Reese's choir is made up predominantly of white students whereas the Patrick Henry choir is made up of all students of color. With 300 miles in between schools, the program is heartfelt, raw at times, soulful, beautiful, and full of hope for the future.

"Breaking Barriers...Building a Foundation of Humanity" was a huge success for both choirs. The Public Broadcasting Service featured Reese's fantastic collaboration and more in a documentary, "More Than Just Music."

"Before her class, I was ignorant and indifferent to the injustices of the world," shared a former student. "She completely changed my perspective. Through choir, I learned about the world beyond me. I learned how to exist in a world with people who are different from me. She has opened my mind and heart to places beyond my corner of the world."

Mrs. Reese has made connections in the music and performance industry, ensuring that her students experience working with professional musicians and producers, and performing in prestigious, historical venues from Lincoln Center and Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City, St. John the Divine in Harlem, Carnegie Hall in New York City, MPR Studio M in St. Paul, St. Paul Cathedral and St. Mary's Basilica in St. Paul/Minneapolis, St. Olaf College in Northfield, Skywalker Ranch Recording Studio in Nacasio, California, plus numerous churches and synagogues in Minneapolis, Chicago, New York City and San Francisco.

"With sensitivity and understanding, Reese holds soul searching, emotional class discussions where she challenges her students to think of ways to give back, be kind, elevate others, show acceptance and empathy and become the change they'd like to see in the world, said Shelby Sorvig. "Together, they have tackled many current issues like poverty, prejudice, addiction and mental illness."

[www.trf.k12.mn.us](http://www.trf.k12.mn.us)  
(218) 681-8711



**More WEM Outstanding Educator Awards on the Next Page**

## Rochester Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence



Monica Steinmetz, a teacher at St. Francis of Assisi School in Rochester Catholic Schools, was a recipient of a 2020 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Steinmetz is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. She is one of two recipients of the Teacher Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement.

Steinmetz has been teaching for 30 years and currently teaches sixth grade. Students in Steinmetz's classroom are given two hours a week to work on a project of their choice. She calls this time STREAM-Maker Mindset. Under her guidance, they discover areas of passion, set goals and present what they've learned at the end of the quarter. Tiered projects, empowered learners, differentiated outcomes and appro-

priate assessments have made this hands-on learning some of Steinmetz favorite projects.

"Mrs. Steinmetz has the skill of educating the "whole student" with her motivation to inspire and impact students with hands-on learning experiences," said Shannon Knoepke.

Steinmetz shares, "Academic achievement is a significant part of my classroom expectations as an educator. Yet, I must disclose that my first area of focus is meeting the social and emotional needs of my students." Steinmetz finds academic achievement is more successful when her students are finding peace and balance in their social and emotional health. She teaches a unit called a "Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset," which begins with students writing student-developed SMART goals, with emphasis on wellness and mindfulness, establishing boundaries for safety, modeling how to ask for help and report concerns, and sets expectations for personal choices, behaviors, and responsibilities.

"Throughout the last school year, we appreciated that Mrs. Steinmetz was dedicated not only to her students, but also to us as parents," said a former classroom parent. "She was encouraging and understanding, and helped us realize that some of the bumps we experienced with our 6th grader were a normal part of the pre-teen experience. Her wisdom and insight helped us be a better parent."

[www.rcsmn.org/schools/st-francis-of-assisi-school](http://www.rcsmn.org/schools/st-francis-of-assisi-school)  
(507) 288-4816



## Mahtomedi Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence



Virginia Mancini, a teacher at Mahtomedi Middle School in Mahtomedi, was surprised with the news that she is a recipient of a 2020 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Mancini is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. She is one of two recipients of the Teacher Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement.

Mancini has been teaching for 21 years and currently teaches seventh grade English. To help develop student's sense of autonomy, Mancini implanted the writer's workshop in her classroom. She believes choice is a key factor to student engagement because it gives students a sense of ownership. With writer's

workshop, student writers get to choose not only what they will write but also what techniques they will use while developing universal writing skills.

"Ms. Mancini's real passion is her teaching and her students," said Dr. Michael Neubeck. "Her ability to meet students where they are at and build positive relationships with them is a real talent. Students understand this care for them and trust Ms. Mancini to help them find success and not just in the classroom."

In addition to classroom teaching, Mancini helped facilitate a monthly SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) seminar for her school district for six years. SEED is a national project on inclusive curriculum. Over the course of a year, SEED participants study equity and social justice issues that impact education, earning them graduate credits. The SEED philosophy is rooted in providing window and mirror experiences with deep reflection. Mancini says, "The change I seek cannot happen if it only happens in my classroom."

"Ms. Mancini puts in the extra work to engage her students and make them think critically about the world and their place in it," shares former student, Ollie Kalthoff. "She pays attention to her students and their needs. And she extends a hand of friendship to those who are willing to take it."

[mahtomedi.k12.mn.us](http://mahtomedi.k12.mn.us)  
(651) 407-2000



## Zimmerman Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence



Tammi Hendrickson, a teacher at Zimmerman Elementary School in Zimmerman, was a recipient of a 2020 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Hendrickson is one of six educators being

honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange with a statewide award for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. She is one of two recipients of the Ethics in Education Award, which recognizes educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum.

Hendrickson has been teaching for 15 years and currently teaches second grade. Hendrickson has a motto in her classroom, "Kindness begins with me—I will do my part." To support students in practicing and modeling kindness for others in and outside of the classroom, students are given "Random acts of Kindness" boards a few times of year. These boards have a series of items (i.e. smile at 5 friends, open the door for someone, write a thank you note to an adult at school) and offer a scaffold of support to those who may struggle coming up with ideas on their own. The first board is for the classroom, the

second one includes tasks within the school, and the last one is for family. Students are proud to go on the "secret mission" of spreading kindness.

"Tammi goes above and beyond to make her students good human beings, teaching about integrity," shares a classroom parent. "This is carried out using creative ways to make the kids aware of their choices and the consequences of those choices, good vs. bad, right vs. wrong, virtue vs. vice. They focus all year on bucket filling or speaking kind words to others to make their day bright."

An important connection between Hendrickson's classroom and home that promotes family time and literacy is "PAK-RAT" (Parents and Kids Reading A Lot Together). PAK-RAT is a program where all students have access to sets of picture books that include titles of enriching, high quality literature. One set covers 6-8 weeks of reading enjoyment. Students take home a book, of their choosing, each day and return it

in the morning. The goal of the program is to have children spend time enjoying a book with a loving adult. The program's bonus side effects are students learning to love books and students becoming voracious readers. Hendrickson feels this is an authentic way to grow readers while, at the same time, building a positive connection between school and home.

"Tammi has a passion for teaching and for children," said Lisa Willman, Principal. "She cares deeply for every one of the students in her classroom and is a strong advocate for each one. She is always looking to see how she can improve her practice. Tammi works diligently to make sure her students are learning and exceeding in her classroom."

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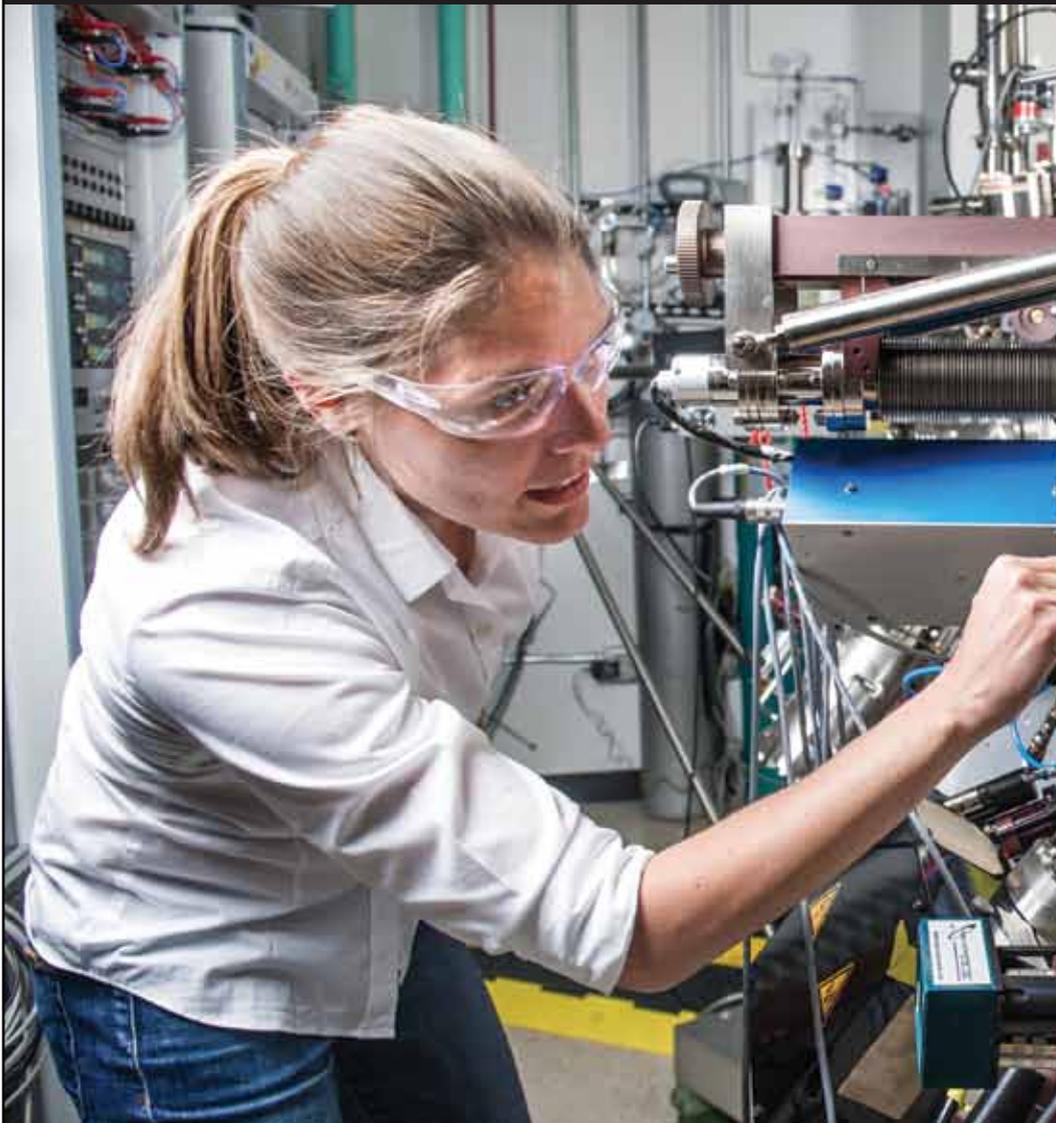
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