

Educators of Excellence

Creating a legacy

April 29, 2020 | 5:30 p.m.



2020 Educators of Excellence

Celebrating excellence

Educators of Excellence Awards celebrate the dedication, hard work, and leadership of innovative educators throughout Sourcewell’s five-county service area of Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties.

How it works

Each school selects a TEACHER OF EXCELLENCE who has demonstrated a commitment to excellence that has led to increased student success.

Special awards recipients are determined by a selection team that reviews nominations for those who have demonstrated innovation and leadership that has positively impacted students and fellow staff. These special awards include:

- TEAM OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
- PARAPROFESSIONAL OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
- LEADER OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
- COACH OF EXCELLENCE

Agenda

- Welcome:**
Paul Drange, Sourcewell Director of Regional Programs
Kassidy Rice, Sourcewell Leader of Education Solutions
- Keynote Speaker:**
Renee Rongen
- Awards presented by:**
Kassidy Rice, Sourcewell Leader of Education Solutions
Paul Drange, Sourcewell Director of Regional Programs
- Closing remarks:**
Dr. Chad Coauette, Sourcewell Executive Director



Keynote Speaker: **Renee Rongen**

Recognized by her peers and clients worldwide as a brilliant comedian and storyteller, Renee Wall Rongen is an award-winning humorist, author, and business consultant. Not only has she been featured in a number of national publications, she is also one of the most in-demand and top-rated speakers in North America.

Renee is the founder of the Ultimate Pajama Party, a national movement responsible for providing hundreds of thousands of pairs of pajamas to domestic violence shelters across the country, as well as the I’m a Girl Movement, following her latest award-winning book release.

Renee loves the outdoors, taking risks, and a good cup of coffee. In the moments between pajama parties and appearances, she can be found at home in northern Minnesota with her husband, Tom, and three children.

LEADER

of Educational Excellence

Dave Fjeldheim

Sebekas Schools Superintendent



Dave Fjeldheim’s vision, direction, and perseverance have helped the region become a statewide leader in professional development, guiding teachers and leaders in impacting student achievement. In 2008, Dave took the first step in advancing professional development in the area by bringing a literacy coaching program to the Freshwater Education District. Within three years the program grew to serve nine school districts and became the seed for services offered today through Education Solutions at Sourcewell. Dave is known by many as a person of great character and is always seeking what’s best for students.

PARAPROFESSIONALS

of Educational Excellence

Roxanne Kriens

Menahga Middle School



Roxanne is truly amazing to watch in a classroom. She adapts, modifies, and creates accommodations on the spot, reteaches, and is patient with everyone. Since Menahga Middle School adopted a literacy intervention program, Roxanne has been key to its success and fidelity. Under her guidance, most students in the intervention grow an additional one to two years in skills.

Jill Dilly

Wadena-Deer Creek Elementary School



Jill’s extraordinary support and efforts have helped deliver reading and math interventions to over 150 Title I eligible students at Wadena-Deer Creek Elementary. Her quiet leadership among her paraprofessional peers has led to a better building of positive student relationships and using an influence approach when assisting students in making good choices.

Cody Pulju
Menahga High School



Cody has been the head girls’ basketball coach at Menahga High School since 2016, compiling an overall record of 93-16, including three consecutive conference titles and two consecutive state appearances. However, he doesn’t measure his success in wins and losses, but rather in his ability to instill lifelong skills that go beyond the game. Whether it’s practice, offseason workouts, or during the game, Cody is always emphasizing five components: work ethic, teamwork, commitment, class, and sportsmanship. Through rapport, Cody shows each individual that he cares more about them as a person than he does about the game.

LITTLE FALLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



NEIL ANDRUSCHAK
Digital Convergence Specialist



ANGIE BELLIG
Lindbergh Elementary Grade 1



REID BELLIG
High School Life Science



SUSAN BENJAMIN
Middle School STEM

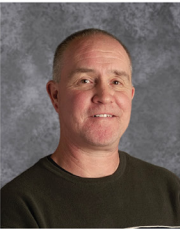


TONY BERGMAN
Lindbergh Elementary Grade 4



MELONIE BROWN
Lincoln Elementary Grade 5

DIGITAL CONVERGENCE ADVANCED COHORT



ANDY WARD
High School Physical Science



KYLE CONNELLY
Middle School Social Studies



CAITLIN SKLUZACEK
Middle School Social Studies



JILL TOMALA
Lincoln Elementary Grade 1



GLENDA DAVIS
Dr. Knight Elementary Grade 2



The Digital Convergence Accelerated Cohort from Little Falls Community Schools

At its core, personalized learning involves giving the learner voice and choice in their learning paths. This empowers the learner and builds relevance to the learning.

Through the work of the Digital Convergence Accelerated Cohort, students and staff across the Little Falls School District have collaborated, creating shared vision statements. From these shared statements, students and staff have collaborated in the creation of classroom codes and the development of standard operating procedures.

Learning roadmaps are being created, allowing students to track and monitor their learning progression. This work continues to positively impact school culture for students, build relevance, meet students’ individual needs, and is helping create an environment that is learner centered versus teacher centered.

The Digital Convergence Accelerated Cohort is driving this work within the district through exploration and implementation of the concepts followed by the professional development that they are providing to their peers.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Mikayla Jorgenson

Bertha-Hewitt School District



Mikayla's special education classroom is indeed 'special.' She goes out of her way to provide innovative learning opportunities for her students, including the creation of sensory stations in her classroom. Her proactive approach has improved the learning environment for her students and the working environment for the paras she oversees.

Kari Champion

Brainerd Public Schools - Baxter Elementary School



An experienced teacher, Kari continues to bring forth passion, innovation, and a desire to learn more, refining her craft as an educator. She is a team player who always comes with a wonderful attitude, putting children first. And her thoughtful teaching is a gift to all who work with her.

Emilee Freed

Brainerd High School



As a teacher of students with significant physical and cognitive disabilities, Emilee teaches independent living and social skills, and approaches each student as an individual with unique needs. She is solution centered and creative and a person who exhibits integrity in teaching to ensure all students have dignity as they face the many challenges in their lives.

Heidi Osmundson

Cass Lake-Bena Elementary School



Every day, students benefit from Heidi's compassion and calm demeanor. Her knowledge of early childhood practices provides the framework for student support, intervention, and classroom instruction. Year after year, Heidi's students have outstanding growth and achievement. Her willingness to try new things, execute tasks with fidelity, and contribute to innovative practices contribute toward building a positive culture within the organization.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Allison Larsen

Crosby-Ironton School District – Cuyuna Range Elementary School



When it comes to preparing students for their future in innovative and exciting ways, there is no better teacher than Allison Larsen. Allison has built an award-winning STEAM program that has students collaborating, creating, and problem-solving like never before. She is an outside-the-box thinker willing to go above and beyond.

Miranda Graceffa

Crosslake Community Charter School



Miranda teaches middle school science but also serves as her school's environmental education coordinator. She increases students' love of science by capturing their curiosity about how the world works. She also provides mentorship to middle school students, who, in turn, present concepts to younger students, which solidifies learning for all.

Michael Gindorff

Crosby-Ironton High School



Mike is, without question, viewed as a top teacher leader among his peers and a well-respected educator with students. Putting student relationships first, Mike is firm but fair and is the type of person people want to be around. His willingness to go above and beyond is unmatched.

Gena Jacobson

Crosslake Community Charter School



Gena brings a creative approach to online special education, dedicating time and energy to student success and providing leadership to the entire team of online special education teachers. She has a passion to remove barriers from student success and does so by collaborating with other teachers to determine the best course of action for each individual student.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Nicole Schmidt

Freshwater Education District - Wadena



Nicole has been a vision impaired teacher in the Freshwater Education District for over 10 years, working with students ages birth through 12th grade. Recently, Nicole coordinated a camp for students with vision needs, allowing them a chance to participate in daily life skills, as well as fun games. The camp is a wonderful learning experience for students, parents, and staff alike!

Kelly Mertens

Little Falls School District – Dr. Knight Elementary School



Kelly’s influence on students goes beyond the classroom. In addition to continuously striving to meet each student’s individual needs, Kelly makes connections with students that truly leave a lasting impression. Students enjoy their time and interaction with her long after they move on through the grade levels.

Ryan Tenold

Little Falls Community Middle School



According to his nominator, Ryan embodies the core of an Educator of Excellence. “You have been a huge part of my daughter’s life, helping her grow,” states an email from a band student’s parent. “She loves band and is so comfortable with you. Thank you for helping her achieve her goals. You go above and beyond, carving out time for her and I can’t thank you enough.”

Brittany Varner

Little Falls School District – Lincoln Elementary School



Brittany strives to meet the individual needs of her students as she challenges them to grow academically and personally. She is also a leader in both her building and with the third grade team when it comes to instructional practices, setting an example for others to follow in teaching Balanced Literacy and Guided Math.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Deb Yliniemi-Ahlin

Little Falls Community High School



Deb's enthusiasm and commitment to success for all students go above and beyond. She is a master teacher who embodies servant leadership, and her dedication to her family, students, school, and community is undeniable! According to her nominator, "Deb is one of the most positive, talented, and caring individuals I have ever had the privilege of working with."

Stephanie Kramer

Menahga Middle School



Stephanie isn't afraid to try new and innovative approaches to curriculum. She works to incorporate as much hands-on learning as possible in the social studies department using multimedia approaches. She actively works to problem solve and is always willing to pitch in whenever needed.

Peggy Rekstad

Little Falls School District – Lindbergh Elementary School



Peggy is a dedicated member of the Literacy Leaders Academy and is committed to sharing her passion for literacy with the staff and students at Lindbergh Elementary. Peggy is a master at creating positive relationships, and her work ethic and passion for reading have created a positive learning environment for each of her students.

Michelle Koch

Menahga Elementary School



Michelle is the rock that holds Menahga Elementary together, says her nominator. Relationships with all students in the district are a priority for Michelle. She works to ensure respect, responsibility, safety, and bravery through her school as she facilitates the SWAT team, as well as challenging the priorities with her involvement with MREA.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Kami Johnson

Menahga High School



Kami's success with students begins with a mission to develop meaningful and authentic relationships that convey a sense of mutual respect. Being passionate about the content she teaches, Kami creates a variety of ways learners can demonstrate their understanding, while maintaining a high level of expectations.

Laurie Barthel

Mid-State Education District



It's easy to see the genuine care and respect Laurie has for all of her students, parents, and colleagues. She is masterful in incorporating many best practice strategies in her classroom and works tirelessly to meet the needs of students and families, as well as being in continuous pursuit of finding creative ways to enhance the home-school connection.

Mike Chuba

Mid-State Education District



Mike has been the DAPE/Phy-Ed Teacher at Mid-State for the past 20 years. He juggles his time between some member districts and with the four Mid-State programs. He is seen as a well-rounded teacher with an innate ability to teach not only motor skills, but also integrating practical work life and social skills into all of his activities with the students.

Karen Rubado

Pequot Lakes Middle School



Karen fosters a creative classroom that establishes a safe space for learners, encouraging them not only to take risks in their learning, but to also be comfortable in who they are. Karen captivates her students with high intellectual challenge and delivery that often borders on a stand-up comedy routine.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Jason Roepke

Pequot Lakes High School



Jason is a top-performing teacher with a passion for student success and is willing to take on the responsibilities of leadership and development that require time outside of the classroom. Students respect his well-organized curriculum and engaging instruction, often describing him as a teacher who makes learning fun yet challenging.

Faye Sandy

Pierz Public Schools – Pioneer Elementary School



Faye is a Teacher of Excellence because of her commitment to children's academic success, her absolute professionalism, and the trust her colleagues have in her. Faye's peers look up to her commitment to instructional success and know if she is trying a strategy to improve learning, they likely also ought to be considering it.

Amanda Kostreba

Pequot Lakes School District – Eagle View Elementary School



As a birth to three ECSE teacher, Amanda works tirelessly supporting and fostering positive relationships with families and students. She goes above and beyond her job duties on a regular basis, balancing home visits, evaluations, and coordinating service providers.

Pat Tax

Pierz Healy High School



Also selected by her peers as the Healy High School Teacher of the Year, Pat is an innovative, caring instructor who demonstrates her passion. She is self-motivated to make a difference in the lives of her students, and their needs always come first. Pat is what one would consider a champion for students' success both academically and in life.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Melissa Bouc

Pillager Elementary School



Melissa is an advocate for all students and works to ensure each student has the opportunity to be successful and achieve their fullest potential. Melissa is a champion for students, as well as a solid leader among her colleagues as a Catalyst coach and active member of the staff development committee.

Kaitlin Rondeau

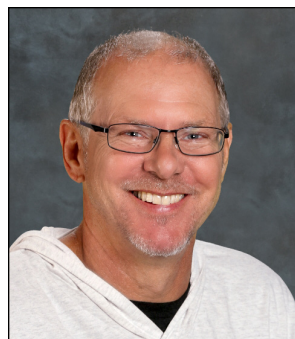
Pillager Middle School



Kaitlin is continually looking for new ways to improve her instruction and enhance the educational experience in her classroom. She brings science and the STEM process to life for students within her classroom with a personal, hands-on approach to instruction, including organizing the annual Science Fair.

Karl Kaufmann

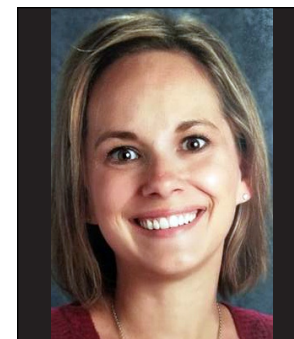
Pillager High School



Karl has an uncanny ability to connect with his students, then connect them to subject matter by making lessons relevant to their current and future lives. Producing high academic achievement and inspiring students in the process, Karl's efforts and dedication have had a tremendously positive impact on the students of Pillager for decades.

Stephanie Dinnel

Pine River-Backus Elementary School



Steph goes above and beyond for her students, communicates effectively with parents, and connects well with her colleagues. One of her greatest qualities is the positive attitude she brings to school and her team each day. Steph always looks at the positives in situations and consistently brings that attitude to her students each day.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Tiffany Abrams

Pine River-Backus High School



Tiffany has high standards and expectations for all learners. She has proven to be a strong leader and advocate for her students and her department – mentoring fellow colleagues through the, sometimes overwhelming, world of special education. Tiffany is not afraid to think creatively and works through any challenges that arise.

Joan Nichols

Royalton Elementary School



Joan is a dedicated special education teacher who has successfully served high-needs students for over 20 years. She is a caring, patient, and flexible educator who makes a difference each day for the children and families who require special support and encouragement. Joan is a great example of what it means to teach the whole child.

Jeff Schoenrock

Royalton Middle and High School



Jeff teaches some of the highest-level math courses at Royalton High School, in addition to taking 18 in-field math credits so he can continue teaching CIS courses for students. He is a positive leader and can always be depended upon to help whenever and wherever needed.

Kari Carlson

Sebeka Elementary School



Kari has been a first-grade teacher at Sebeka Elementary for 20 years. Kari is a teacher of excellence due to her passion for learning, dedication to her responsibilities, commitment to improve professionally, and overall compassion for the children who learn and grow in her classroom.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Dave Kerkvliet

Sebeka High School



Dave (also known as Mr. K) has provided leadership in instrumental music at Sebeka School for nearly 25 years. While Mr. K’s ability to have nearly every student join instrumental music in the fifth grade is impressive, the retention of those students throughout high school speaks for itself.

Sarah Dano

Motley-Staples Middle School



Sarah is continuously learning and improving herself as an educator. She searches out ways to meet her students where they are, along with facilitating their growth as people and students. This commitment to improvement is an exceptional model for both staff and students alike.

Stacey Carter

Staples-Motley Elementary School



Stacey has been teaching in the Staples-Motley School District for 31 years. Her quick wit helps push teams forward and laugh, all while continuing the important work educators attend to each and every day.

Joy Rippentrop

Staples-Motley High School



Great educators not only teach students, they reach them. Joy Rippentrop is a fine example of a courageous teacher who empowers her students’ academic, emotional, and social growth. Her efforts with the Connections classroom and ProStart are blended seamlessly with her caring approach to her students.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Adam Gerads

Swanville High School



On a daily basis, Adam demonstrates his love of teaching and how much he cares about each and every student. As a special education teacher, he pushes each student to do their best by knowing their strengths and weaknesses and capitalizing on both. He is always upbeat and a ray of sunshine to both students and staff.

Jim Drill

Upsala Elementary School



After teaching in the Upsala School District for 34 years, Jim has had a profound impact on the lives of many. He instills integrity in his students while teaching life skills they can use beyond the classroom. Jim has also served as a great role model to our young elementary staff on what it takes to be a great teacher.

Sheyanne Sebek

Swanville Elementary School



Sheyanne is always looking for ways to improve student learning. In addition to developing the English Learner program, she teaches reading under the Alternative Delivery of Specialized Intervention Services, is a member of the ADSIS team, has worked on Alternative Career Pathways programs, and – this year – is teaching seventh grade reading. She is a teacher of many talents.

Amber Mayers

Upsala High School



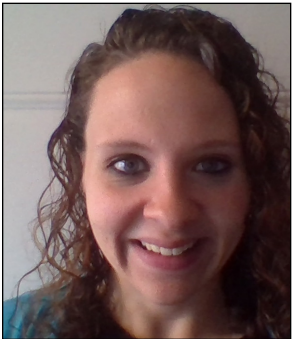
Miss Amber, as she's known by students, is a special education teacher whose work goes beyond the resource room. She is a strong advocate not only for her students, but other UHS students as well. Her ability to form positive relationships has given many students a teacher they can confide in.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Jamie Adams

Verndale Elementary School



Jamie goes above and beyond to meet the needs of her students, ensuring their hard work doesn't go unnoticed, and by recognizing them at all-school Pirate Pride celebrations. She also goes out of her way to make sure her colleagues have the support and resources they need to provide the best education for their students.

Brad Wollum

Wadena-Deer Creek Senior High School



As a junior high school science teacher, Brad takes a hands-on approach to teaching and learning. His lab-based focus keeps students excited and wanting to learn. Many of his former and current students have said, "Mr. Wollum just loves science." His students pick up on his positive energy, and his science classroom is a place they want to be.

Sam Schmitz

Verndale High School



Sam is a strong educational leader who is dedicated to her school, students, athletes, and community. Her enthusiasm and love for teaching are expressed through her innovative content delivery and the rapport she has built with her students. Sam does whatever it takes to help students succeed.

Keith Ferris

Wadena-Deer Creek Elementary School



The three words that best describe Keith are genuine, honest, and intuitive. Keith's WDC colleagues hold him in high regard and he is known as the go-to guy for many curriculum, technology, and classroom/team management best practices. He also maintains his administrators' and colleagues' confidence as a teacher unit representative and negotiator.

TEACHERS

Educators of Excellence

Kristen Bockovich

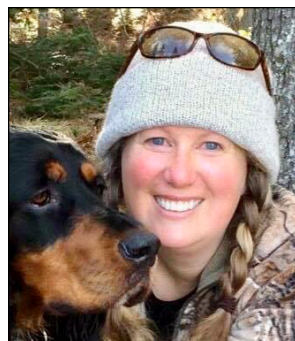
Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Elementary School



Kristen shows excellence in her instruction, classroom management, and through positive, calm, and lasting student rapport. She plans well and adds many extra pieces to interest and motivate students. Kristen contributes to the school in a student assistance team, through HRT and ENVoY certification, coaching volleyball, a teacher training team, and as the local union leadership.

Debbie Petersen

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High School



Debbie is a leader, not only within the science department, but also among the high school staff. She builds strong relationships with her students and goes out of her way to make her classroom fun and interesting for students. Debbie has taken on new roles by teaching AVID and expanding her relationship and classroom management skills by using Catalyst (formerly ENVoY). She consistently models excellence in education, contributing to making WHA a better place.

THANK YOU

“Every year I’m blown away by the caliber of teachers, paraprofessionals, leaders, coaches, and teams at this event – and this year is absolutely no exception.

Each of you emulates exactly what it means to be – not only successful – but to be an individual of strong character, conviction, and passion.”

— Sourcewell CEO and Executive Director,
Dr. Chad Coauette



Sourcewell: we are driven to serve

Who is Sourcewell?

Sourcewell is a self-supporting government organization, partnering with education, government, and nonprofits to boost student and community success. Created in 1978 as one of Minnesota's nine service cooperatives, we offer training and shared services to our central-Minnesota members. Throughout North America, we offer a cooperative purchasing program with more than 400 awarded suppliers on contract. Sourcewell is driven by service and the ability to strategically reinvest in member communities.

Our core services

- Cooperative Purchasing
- Community Solutions
- Education and Career and College Readiness
- Regional Low Incidence Project and Collaborative Service Workers
- Insurance and Employee Benefits
- Technology