

# Educators of Excellence

Celebrating the stories that shape us

May 8, 2019 | 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

# Celebrating excellence

The Educators of Excellence Awards Banquet celebrates innovative educators across Region 5.

Tonight, we recognize their dedication, hard work, and leadership.

## How it works:

### TEACHER OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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

### TEAM OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

A selection team reviews nominations and chooses recipients who have demonstrated innovation and leadership that have positively impacted students and fellow staff.

### PARAPROFESSIONAL OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

### LEADER OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

### COACH OF EXCELLENCE

# 2019 Educators of Excellence

5:30 p.m.	Registration
6 p.m.	Welcome Paul Drange, Sourcewell Director of Regional Programs
6:10 p.m.	Dinner
6:45 p.m.	Keynote Speaker: Katy Smith
7:30 p.m.	Awards Kassidy Rice, Sourcewell Leader of Education Solutions Paul Drange, Sourcewell Director of Regional Programs Horace Mann Insurance
8:15 p.m.	Closing remarks Kassidy Rice, Sourcewell Leader of Education Solutions Dr. Chad Coauette, Sourcewell Executive Director

## Keynote Speaker: **Katy Smith**



Katy Smith has dedicated her career to engaging communities in transformative conversations. She is a keynote speaker, an educator, a trainer, and a valued resource for parents and educators. Katy is the 2011 Minnesota Teacher of the Year, the first early childhood teacher in Minnesota, and the first parent educator nationally, to be honored with the award.

# LEADER of Educational Excellence

## Jeannie Mayer

Menahga Elementary



Jeannie is a leader in every aspect of the word. She keeps the best interest of all students in mind, maintaining high expectations for all. She connects with all 500 students under her care and knows each one by name. Last year, Jeannie implemented weekly morning meetings. She and her paraprofessionals took all 500 K-4 students into the gym and led them through meaningful activities, allowing her teachers to meet in their PLCs. This year, Jeannie has reinvented these assemblies to be grade-level student meetings and monthly all-school meetings. This allows her and her team to differentiate for each grade level, focusing on the specific needs for the individual grade. She champions initiatives because she is passionate about the success of all students and her staff. Under her guidance the elementary has become an ENVoY-certified site, integrated PRESS, and most recently added PBIS. Her students and staff have all grown tremendously.

---

# PARAPROFESSIONALS of Educational Excellence

## Wendy Neugebauer

Brainerd Public Schools – Lincoln Education Center



Wendy has a true commitment and passion for working with students with disabilities. She works in an elementary-level, self-contained classroom with students who have significant mental health disorders and social/emotional/behavioral challenges. Wendy is a paraprofessional who requires very little direction and is a true partner in the classroom. She can easily take over running the classroom when needed and holds students to the same standards as the classroom teacher. Wendy understands the value of building positive relationships with her students and knows the impact it has on her students and their growth.

---

## Ruth Brueland

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Elementary



After 35½ years, Ruth still looks forward to work every day. That is a sign of a fulfilling career. Ruth is a shining example of what all educators pursue: the opportunity to live with purpose and have a positive impact on future generations. She is a true leader at school and in her community. Whether or not she realizes it, she leads by example. The small kindnesses to staff and students make a lasting impact on many lives on a regular basis. From the time she donates for school events, demonstrating a willingness to help wherever she is needed. From the snow pants she stitched up for a student to the positivity she spreads to each person she encounters, Ruth lives each day as a testament to Maya Angelou's quote, "...people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." For this lasting gift, we owe this special lady a debt of gratitude.

# COACH of Excellence

## Leo Pohlkamp

Pierz School District



Leo has been the head football coach in Pierz for 33 years, compiling a 276-84 record with three state championships. His team has gone to state 14 times; thus, he has won 14 section championships. Leo is not just a football coach; he teaches his players many life skills along the way. Pierz does not have a winning successful program because the school has great football players. It's because its football players are great people. Leo's number one rule is respect. He teaches his players to respect their opponent, the coaches, and the officials. He always states to his players, "Never fear your opponent but always respect them." Several referees and coaches over the years have said it is a pleasure playing/officiating in Pierz because of the good sportsmanship, respect of the game, and the people involved with it.

# TEAM of Educational Excellence



Shown left to right:

AMY HOFMANN, PAM CLONTZ, MARIE GORDON, SUE BUHLMANN, PAM STOCK, BRADY SYKORA, MINNIE FISCHER, AND BRYAN SYRSTAD.

## **Special Education Team – Crosby-Ironton High School**

Webster’s Dictionary defines “team” as “a group of players forming one side in a competitive game or sport.” The special education team at Crosby-Ironton High School exemplifies this definition and then some.

The “game” at Crosby-Ironton High School is “student achievement,” and its special education teachers are some of the most fearsome competitors around when it comes to making sure students achieve at the highest level. A great analogy is how this team compares to the game of baseball. In baseball, the home plate is always the same width. Whether you’re playing pony league or you’re in the major leagues, it’s a standard.

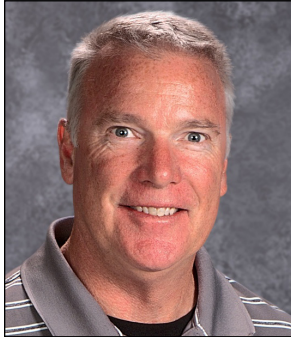
The Crosby-Ironton High School special education teachers never ask to have home plate, or the standards everyone is required to learn, widened so they can more easily throw a strike. Instead, they may ask the regular education teachers to allow a student to move a little closer to home plate to be able to throw that strike and successfully meet the standard. Other times, they may ask to allow a student a few more pitches to get a strike and achieve the standard. Isn’t that what special education should be all about?

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Steve Pauly

Bertha-Hewitt School District

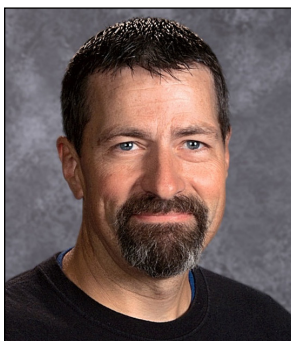


The Bertha-Hewitt School District recognizes that building relationships with students is incredibly important and says that no one does it better than Steve Pauly. In the staff workroom, the motto reads: “Bertha-Hewitt: The Power of One.” This motto serves as a reminder that every student in the building has the power of one: a staff member he/she can go to for advice, help, or just to talk. Steve truly exemplifies the “Power of One” for many students in his building. He is a great classroom teacher, but it’s his calm, positive demeanor that draws kids to him.

---

### Greg Gearey

Brainerd High School



Greg takes great ownership in his students’ learning, taking the time to learn and understand the abilities of each student, then individualizing his instruction to meet their needs. He has a deep care and concern for his classroom and does a great job developing relationships with his students. It’s easy to see that Greg has a strong work ethic, and he has certainly earned the respect of his peers. Greg is laser focused on his craft and his goals as a teacher. His work ethic and preparation are second to none; in his professional life he is a teacher and a coach, but a teacher first.

# Miranda Pape

Brainerd Public Schools – Lincoln Education Center



With dedication, integrity, and passion for working with students with disabilities, Miranda teaches in an elementary-level, self-contained classroom with students who have significant mental health conditions and emotional/behavioral disabilities. Her classroom is one that is highly structured, consistent, and holds high standards for students' academic success. Miranda understands the power of building positive relationships with her students and the impact it has on their social emotional well-being. She dedicates long hours to lesson planning for her students, communicating with families, and providing leadership and guidance to her colleagues.

---

# Tamie Swanson

Brainerd Public Schools - Baxter Elementary School



Tamie has an incredible way reaching all students, knowing student abilities, and then diversifying her teaching to meet those needs. Every child knows that she cares, that she is passionate about education, that she absolutely loves teaching, and that she believes in them. Her boundless energy, engaging personality, and personalized teaching style motivate and encourage students to grab every moment of the day. Tamie displays a high degree of integrity, professionalism, and ambition. She has great rapport with colleagues. Her passion and drive for best practice and innovation are evident and strong. Tamie's leadership commitments include: staff development, continuous improvement, building literacy, PLC leader, and curriculum representative.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Dawn Cook

Cass Lake-Bena Elementary



Last year, Dawn was nominated for and received the Relentless Teacher Award for her tireless efforts to create a safe and conducive environment for her students. Every day, she commits herself to providing each of her students what they need when they need it. She is recognized by her colleagues as a person of professional excellence. She sets high expectations for her students, which they consistently achieve. Her efforts toward creating an environment rich with differentiation and hands-on learning are an example for all others to strive for.

---

### Josh Corbett

Crosby-Ironton School District – Cuyuna Range Elementary



The mission statement in the Crosby-Ironton School District is “Learning Through Relationships.” No teacher does a better job of fulfilling this mission than Josh Corbett. Josh is in his third year of teaching sixth grade at CRES, and in that time, has stepped up as a leader, an innovator, and a person who cares about the entire CRES student body. Josh works closely with each student to focus on interventions that will help behavior and academics. He is always thinking of creative ways to keep students engaged and is highly committed to his school and community.

## Pam Stock

Crosby-Ironton High School



Pam has been a developmental cognitive disability teacher in the Crosby-Ironton School District for 32 years and does an amazing job providing opportunities for students to gain as much independence as possible. Many of her students go on to live on their own, go to college, gain employment competitively, and more. She has been instrumental in the district's compliance with autism spectrum disabilities rules and representation, is a member of the Parents and Teachers Helping Students Succeed team, the high school's crisis team, the 7-12 site team, and the K-12 recertification committee for teacher licenses.

---

## Janna Blanski

Crosslake Community Charter School



Janna knows when to listen and when to ignore, is reflective, gives emotional support to her students, has excellent communication skills with parents, staff, and students, shares her knowledge, and is helpful to staff. She is also willing to step out of her comfort zone to help others and has a wonderful sense of humor. She has high expectations of her students and uses praise authentically. She is also ENVoY certified and she runs an amazing IEP meeting.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Shawn McAllister

Freshwater Education District



Shawn is an early childhood special education teacher who serves in a variety of roles. She is a committed home visitor who works with parents and other caregivers of infants and toddlers with special needs. She establishes great rapport with families, as well as provides multiple strategies for families to incorporate into their own routines. Shawn then works with other home visitors to incorporate this routine-based intervention into their practice. Additionally, Shawn is a behavior coach for ECSE preschool staff and is the lead teacher who coordinates review and implementation of outcomes and program quality.

---

### Mary Dennis

Little Falls Community Middle School



Mary has served as a language arts teacher at Little Falls Community Middle School for 26 years. She not only serves as a teacher but is part of the “fabric” of LFCMS. Mary truly embodies what it means to be a middle school teacher, serving as a guiding light and example for all. She has high expectations not only for herself, but also for those around her. Her integrity, professionalism, and relationship skills are beyond reproach.

# Laura Dunlap

Little Falls Continuing Education Center



Laura is the director of the Little Falls Continuing Education Center and a life coach for the 108 students enrolled at the CEC. She is a licensed school social worker and an “opportunity specialist,” working with each student to find a path toward graduation. She has a special gift of holding students accountable in a nurturing way. Her dedication toward helping at-risk students for the past 29 years has helped hundreds of students earn their high school diploma.

---

# Alysson Jager

Little Falls School District – Dr. Knight Elementary



As the lead teacher of her building, Alysson takes on the challenges of personalizing student learning and scheduling paraprofessionals. She defines being a team player. It is also a pleasure to watch her interact with her students in such a positive and calm demeanor no matter how hectic the moment or day might be. It is always about positive interaction with her students and meeting each individual’s needs. Her students look forward to the time they get to spend with her.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Anita Larsen

Little Falls School District – Lincoln Elementary

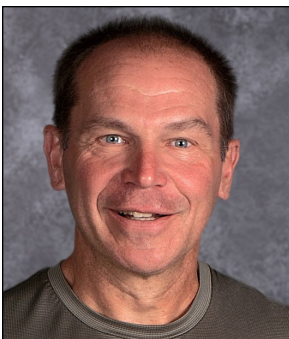


As her school's social worker, Anita is a dedicated advocate for the students and children in our community. Anita has played a vital role in establishing and maintaining the district's weekend food backpack program. She also initiated the district's formation of a Trauma Informed Care Team. This team has been vital in making staff aware of students who have experienced trauma and how to interact with these students. All of these things mentioned are above and beyond her daily responsibilities as the school social worker.

---

### Jeff Massmann

Little Falls Community High School



Jeff teaches physical education at Little Falls Community High School and excels at building relationships with his students and athletes. Jeff makes learning fun as he works with every student to find their personal fitness. He is a master teacher who cares deeply about kids. Jeff models Flyer Pride and is recognized by his students and peers as a leader who gets things done.

# Tara Pauly

Little Falls School District – Lindbergh Elementary



By day, Tara works to create a positive learning environment where all of her students feel safe and supported. Before and after school, Tara is involved with Lindbergh's PTA group helping with fun events such as the annual Fall Feast and Family Fun Night. Tara is also an active member on Lindbergh's Flyer Pride team that provides assistance to the PBIS program. Tara helps set up monthly celebrations at Lindbergh for students to be recognized for showing Flyer Pride and is tireless in her efforts to help decorate and make Lindbergh Elementary School a better place for staff and students. Tara's commitment to Lindbergh makes her a teacher of excellence.

---

# Katie Lieser

Long Prairie-Grey Eagle Elementary



Katie forms great relationships with each of her students and goes out of her way to make everyone who enters her room feel special. She shows wonderful leadership skills in the areas of curriculum and professional growth. She is an active member of the Literacy Leaders Academy team and willingly shares her information and knowledge with others upon returning from her meetings. Katie is well respected by her peers and has an abundance of passion to be an excellent role model for her students as well as fellow educators.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Adele Esala

Menahga Middle School



Adele is a master teacher in literacy. She and a colleague created rigorous, standards-aligned, novel-based units that challenge students to grow in their literacy. This year, Adele stepped up to the plate to mentor a new sixth grade reading teacher. Mentoring new teachers always requires the cooperating teacher to spend valuable extra time with their mentee, but Adele takes it a step further. Her role as mentor and lead teacher took on a new urgency when she announced her retirement and her colleague moved into a new position. From spending extra prep time to team teaching to modeling lessons with her mentee, Adele is making sure that the high expectations for learning in reading continue in grade six long into the future.

---

### Nichole Weston

Menahga Elementary



Nichole is a leader who is always looking for leadership opportunities. She is on the PBIS team, Leadership Team, Student Intervention Team, and Science Curriculum. Nichole steps in as a principal substitute when principals are out of the building. She is also the lead on the school's Tech Mobile project, as well as a co-grant recipient for a MakerSpace for Menahga Elementary! She is always putting kids in the center of everything she does.

# Tim Wurdock

Menahga High School



Tim has skillfully taught high school math for the past 24 years as an inspiring and innovative teacher who demonstrates his love and passion for what he does each and every day. Students have flocked to his classes to experience his wisdom and humor. All the while he makes high school and college-level math courses relevant, fun, and exciting. His commitment extends outside of the classroom, as he is also an assistant boys basketball coach. Tim is not only a passionate leader and mentor to countless students/athletes but also staff. He is considered a positive leader by his colleagues and at no point is he afraid to ask difficult questions while taking time to listen.

---

# Beka Swisher

Mid-State Education District



Beka is a bright spirit who is passionate about helping others and organizations. She has been the early childhood coordinator/early childhood parent educator partnering with four member districts over the past 12 years. Among a large number of responsibilities, she also coordinates and teaches early childhood family education, encouraging and equipping parents to be their child's first and most important teacher. Beka shares in the important work of supporting her organization's culture and services in member districts.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Matt Ingman

Pequot Lakes Middle School



Matt is a teacher who models exemplary ability, not only as an eighth grade Earth Science teacher, but also in his ability to make connections with all of his students. Matt's instruction helps kids dive deep into the world of scientific inquiry, all while caring deeply about the students he serves, making them laugh every day. Beyond the classroom, Matt is active in instructional leadership, not only formally through building and district leadership teams, but also informally, as an active participant in professional learning communities.

---

### Jon Thorson

Pequot Lakes High School



Jon is a veteran teacher who displays the flexibility and aptitude every principal desires. As a math teacher Jon has adopted a philosophy that seeks to teach math concept over procedure. He has developed a curriculum that places these concepts in the context of relevant, real-world examples students can relate to. His success with students begins with a mission to develop meaningful authentic relationships that convey a sense of mutual respect. Building on these relationships, Jon adapts his curriculum to meet student needs, makes himself available outside of classroom hours, and reaches out to struggling learners to support their growth in every area of life.

# Michele Zeidler

Pequot Lakes School District – Eagle View Elementary



As a dynamic kindergarten teacher, Michele strives to ensure an effective learning experience for her students to achieve mastery. This is evident through a student-centered, inquiry-based classroom design and collaborative push-in model for instruction. She focuses on the needs of each individual learner and personalizes their learning. Michele's dedication to excellence and innovation extends beyond the classroom through PLCs, building level teams, and leading professional development. She is the on-site lead for implementation of a new reading curriculum and has supported a grateful staff developing materials and providing trainings.

---

# Kristie Virnig

Pierz Public Schools – Pioneer Elementary



Also selected by her peers as the Pioneer Elementary School Teacher of the Year, Kristie is an anchor teacher in Pierz. She is highly respected as a colleague, parent, and teacher. Kristie is exceptionally kindhearted and always searches for what is right in each child in her classroom. She took it upon herself to spend many summer hours retooling her use of technologies for student learning by aligning every piece of software her students access using Chromebooks to grade two standards. Kristie is also an active member of the Parent Teacher Organization and assists with planning and implementation of valuable learning experiences for Pierz children outside the usual school day.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Roxanne Welle

Pierz Healy High School



Roxanne exemplifies the professional qualities desired in all educators. Her job as a media specialist is continuously evolving. In her time at Pierz Healy High School, she has transformed what was previously known only as a library to an innovative media and technology center. In her role as a media specialist, her true passion for reading has not been replaced with the need for technology; rather, it has been further ignited and evolved. She has revamped and renewed the selection of books to meet the needs of all learners and their interests, which has allowed students to engage in reading who may not have before. She has also expanded the media space to include a makerspace, virtual reality, and the computer support intern (CSI) class.

---

### Alice Foran

Pillager Elementary



Alice's passion and enthusiasm can be felt simply by walking into her classroom and seeing her first-graders working independently in their "smart spots" while she works with a small group of students in guided reading or guided math. First-graders working independently doesn't just happen! Alice uses her knowledge of effective ENVoY strategies to get the most out of her instruction while fostering positive relationships with her students. She is also an example of what the best educators do: continually learn from others and share their learning with colleagues.

# Carissa Goff

Pillager High School



Carissa Goff is an integral part of the Pillager High School special education team. She has great patience and understanding for the at-risk students in her classes and remains calm in the most difficult of situations while looking for the positive aspects of each student and situation. Carissa advocates for her students but, more importantly, helps teach them how to advocate for themselves. She has developed and led a social skills program that has helped transform her school's EBD program and has taught students skills that will positively affect their lives both in and outside of school.

---

# Beth Streit

Pillager Middle School



Beth is an innovative, caring instructor who draws students into her subject matter by effectively implementing many teaching strategies. She is an exceptional educator largely because of the 3 R's. Her classes are RIGOROUS; she challenges her students to do their best and reach for a high bar. She makes learning RELEVANT by developing hands-on activities that connect her eighth-grade science content to the real world the students interact with every day. And Beth takes the time to get to know her students and develop RELATIONSHIPS that help create a caring and effective classroom atmosphere.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Cheri Lemberg

Pine River-Backus Elementary



As a second-grade teacher at Pine River-Backus Elementary, Cheri is a huge advocate for students and her fellow colleagues. She continually models a growth mindset by looking for ways to improve her craft by asking great questions, participating in professional development, collaborating with colleagues, continually searching for best practice, and being a teacher leader. She relentlessly works to meet the needs of each and every student in her classroom.

---

### Kay Sawyer

Pine River-Backus Public Schools



Kay has been an educator in the Pine River-Backus School system since 1987, teaching primary classroom, Title, phy-ed, and coaching. She's currently in the ALC setting working with at-risk youth. Kay embraces unique challenges and provides students a meaningful education while providing the encouragement, empathy, and support needed. Kay has shown great initiative by developing new courses and adding meaningful instructional practices. She keeps her courses engaging and challenging, while accommodating learners who struggle. She connects with students and provides them with the encouragement needed to stay in school and obtain their diploma.

# Greta Bergman

Royalton Middle and High School



Greta is innovative and constantly researching and networking to find curricular materials and instructional methods to enhance student learning. Her emerging leadership in her field is evidenced by her presenting at the State Math Teachers Conference. She exemplifies what it means to constantly grow and improve as an instructor. Greta has great relationships with her students and goes the extra mile to make sure students grasp and understand the concepts she is teaching in any of her classes.

---

# Amy Skeate-Carlson

Royalton Elementary



Amy is skillful, reflective, caring, and an exceptional fifth-grade teacher. In all subjects she is enthusiastic, engaging, and challenging. In addition to high-level literacy and math instruction, she is highly talented in the visual arts. Amy also shares her talents as a teacher leader in her school. She is a valuable member of the arts, school climate, and Reading Is Fundamental committees, as well as supervisor of student council. Each year she guides student efforts to build school spirit and raise funds for special needs and projects.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Carol Lindroos

Sebek Elementary



Carol is a first-grade teacher and, though close to retirement, decided to become an ENVoY coach. When she finished her training, she returned to school renewed and excited to help coach her colleagues. She has willingly given up her prep and classroom time to help prepare her fellow teachers to become ENVoY certified. Carol has also implemented the S.M.A.R.T (stimulating maturity through accelerated readiness training) program into her classroom. This program involves brain stimulation activities to help prepare children to learn by developing visual, auditory, balance, fine, and gross motor skills.

---

### Becca Pulju

Sebek High School



When you walk into Becca's classroom, students are welcomed with a smile and are entertained while learning. Students know that they can come to Becca and she will listen and be willing to give advice. When asked to be on a committee, she will not hesitate to say yes. She is also willing to teach her colleagues everything she knows. No matter how she is feeling, you know that when you see Becca she will greet you with a big smile and a loud hello.

# Ginger Stiner

Staples-Motley Elementary



Ginger is a kindergarten teacher at Staples Motley Elementary. She offers a student-centered classroom, which is rich with active learning throughout the day. Along with her dedication to her students, she is also working to complete her master's in education. Ginger wears so many hats: She is a member of the local literacy academy team, a peer coach, and leads the targeted services STAR program. Ginger is always positive and professional. She works hard to build her team up through collaboration and is always looking for ways to improve her own practice through her reflective conversations with others.

---

# Julie Richgels

Motley-Staples Middle School



Julie is a teacher of excellence in working with both students and her co-workers. She is always there for students and works hard to create relationships that not only motivate the students to be successful, but also one that students seek for support in their toughest times. Academically, she empowers the students to be successful while supporting their growth. She is truly a champion for students' success both in life and academics. Julie has also been a great mentor to other staff members, willingly sharing her vast knowledge and providing support to them in their growth as educators.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Valerie Turner

Staples-Motley High School



Val is one of those teachers who know how to connect, teach, and play with her students. Her efforts are reflected in little to no late or missing work from her students on a weekly basis. Parents applaud her communication and dedication to not only her students but her continued creativity within her teaching ranks. She's a proven academic leader!

---

### Chantelle Frie

Swanville High School



Chantelle is a shining example of what an outstanding teacher looks like and does on a daily basis. Her personality is always upbeat and looking for the good in people. She has a genuine, caring personality that students seek out. She never shies away from a task and is willing to take on multiple roles in the school. She seeks ways to bring Language Arts alive for her students in a variety of ways. She is thoughtful, insightful, and always looking for ways to make the school shine just a little brighter!

# Pete Swisher

Swanville Elementary



Pete has grown as a teacher over the years to the point where he is now considered a leader, not only in the elementary, but throughout the district. He recently finished his term as a peer coach under the Marzano model, and is currently on the staff development committee and the negotiations team. His passion is science and he is constantly looking for ways to provide hands-on science lessons for his students.

---

# Vicki Pangrac

Upsala Elementary



Vicki has been an elementary teacher in the Upsala School District for 39 years. In that time, she has positively impacted generations of Upsala students. Vicki has many qualities that make her a great teacher. She is passionate, hard-working, and dedicated. She pushes her students to their full potential and challenges them to go even further. She brings a smiling face to work every day, even when she is faced with a challenging group of students. These qualities and many more make her a true teacher of excellence!

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Curtis Robertson

Upsala High School



Curtis is a “jack of all trades” for both the Upsala School District and high school, wearing a variety of hats. He is the district IT person, AVID teacher, technology teacher, and robotics coach. He also serves as the National Honor Society advisor and is a member of the school’s leadership team. Despite being pulled in numerous directions, Curtis is excellent in all the roles he serves. He is dedicated to his students and to the staff at Upsala High School.

---

### Heather Arroyo

Verndale Elementary



Heather, a K-2 intervention teacher, exemplifies many of the qualities that make a teacher excellent. She cares deeply about her students — not only their academic needs, but their emotional and social needs as well. Heather puts in long hours to establish an intervention system that will benefit all students and all members of her team. Heather has also helped establish W.I.N. time in K-third grade and is a vital part of the K-2 team, leading the group in data meetings and best practices.

# Rachel Bounds

Verndale High School



Rachel puts tremendous effort into her instruction to provide students with multiple ways to understand a problem. She is an innovator in creating and selecting material that not only supports the priority standards, but also ensures students really understand the underlying concepts. Rachel consistently makes herself available to help students outside of class, multiple days each week. She is a model teacher to watch while Verndale High School goes through the High Reliability School process because she has used and perfected many of the Marzano elements and strategies throughout her teaching career.

---

# Robby Grendahl

Wadena-Deer Creek Senior High



Robby is organized, passionate, and always doing what is best for students. As a social studies teacher, he sets high expectations for his students. His goal is to prepare his students for life after high school. Former students would say his life lessons are what separate him from your typical teacher. Course content is important, but more important is Robby's desire to teach kids how to be good and productive citizens. As a colleague, Robby is not afraid to ask the tough questions. His intent with these questions is always what can better help students.

# TEACHERS

## Educators of Excellence

### Carol Tornquist

Wadena-Deer Creek Elementary



Teaching K-4 Wadena-Deer Creek students over the past 30-plus years, Carol has shown a consistent desire to do the best she can for her students, parents, and colleagues. Her contributions include working with a team of colleagues to secure a million dollar Reading First grant from 2004 through 2006. This grant entitled Wadena-Deer Creek's staff to begin a collaborative study of best practices in reading instruction and implementing a schoolwide scientifically based reading intervention for Title 1 students. Carol has also opened her classroom to area colleagues as an ENVoY demonstration teacher and Pathways to Reading Excellence in School Sites (PRESS) mentor teacher with Sourcewell.

---

### Cindy Alto

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Elementary



An educator in the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School District for the last 23 years, Cindy epitomizes a lifelong learner and someone who leads by example. When you walk into her second-grade classroom, her patient demeanor, the calm environment she creates, the unconditional love and respect she gives all of her students, and her passion for teaching are immediately evident. Even after 23 years, Cindy strives to be the best she can be, wanting feedback to grow her practice. Cindy has taken on a leadership role within her PLC, serves on her building leadership team, is a part of the Literacy Leaders Academy, and leads by example with the work WHA is doing to become a High Reliability School.

# Ben Offerman

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Secondary



Ben exemplifies what it means to be a high reliability teacher. He uses effective instructional strategies in his classroom, has great rapport with his students, and, if asked, is always willing to help a colleague. Ben serves on his building's leadership team, works to help teachers integrate the use of technology into their classrooms, and serves as the example of teacher leadership for which all should strive.

# Sourcewell: we are driven to serve our region

## Who is Sourcewell?

Formerly National Joint Powers Alliance (NJPA), Sourcewell is a self-supporting government organization, partnering with education, government, and nonprofits to boost student and community success. 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 over 300 awarded vendors on contract. We are driven by service and the ability to strategically reinvest in member communities.

## Our core services

- Cooperative Purchasing
- City, County, Nonprofits, and other Government Associations
- Education and Career and College Readiness
- Regional Low Incidence Project and Collaborative Service Workers
- Insurance and Employee Benefits
- Technology