

April 14, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Elk River Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Ron Hustvedt Jr., a teacher at Salk Middle School in the Elk River Area Public Schools was surprised April 14 with news that he is a recipient of a 2015 WEM Outstanding Educator Award as an Academic Challenge Coach, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Hustvedt is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. He is one of two recipients of the WEM Foundation's statewide Academic Challenge Coach Award, which recognizes teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League.

Hustvedt has been teaching and coaching for 17 years. He currently teaches middle school Minnesota and U.S. social studies and coaches History Day.

Hustvedt brought History Day to Salk Middle school and in its first year 150 students participated. The program has since grown to more than 700 students participating! During the last six years, Salk has gone from being a newcomer in this competition to one of the top performing in the state.

Hustvedt's ability to blend History Day with other hands on teaching strategies makes his classroom a model for inspiring and engaging students of all abilities. "Mr. Hustvedt consistently demonstrates a passion for the History Day program, shares his enthusiasm with his students and encourages participation from students of all backgrounds and learning abilities," shares principal Julie Athman.

In addition to his teaching and coaching, Hustvedt is the co-coordinator of the student news program, is a member of the school's building advisory board, is a member of the Building Site Council and is an active member in the social studies Professional Learning Community.

"If I could summarize my achievements, I'd say that I've met my goal I set out to do when I began teaching; making school and learning social studies the best possible experience for my students. Seeing students proud of themselves, shocked by their accomplishments, and more interested in their world is the big payoff," states Hustvedt.

In addition to the *Academic Challenge Coach Award*, other educators are being honored with the *Ethics in Education Award* (exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum) and the *Teacher Achievement Award* (exemplary teachers who support, inspire, and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement).

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.

In addition to the six statewide honorees, additional educators have been selected as regional honorees for 2015. These names will be announced in May.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) 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.