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For immediate release Leah Garry, Synergy & Leadership Exchange

 Phone: 507-389-5115

Dodge Center Educator Named Recipient of $15,000 Award for Excellence

Rebecca Goossens, a teacher at Triton High School in Dodge Center, was surprised with the news that she is a recipient of a 2021 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a $15,000 award.

Goossens 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.

Goossens has been teaching for 10 years and currently teaches business education courses at Triton High School. Goossens strives to teach the importance of teambuilding and create a sense of community in each of her classes. One way she does this is through weekly check-ins with each of the students in her classes which also provides them an opportunity to self-reflect. She also has students fill out self-evaluations at the end of each unit where they reflect on how comfortable they are with the learning targets, if there are any areas they are struggling with, how balanced they feel the workload was, and whether the assessments were meaningful and helped them learn. She then routinely makes changes to curriculum and teaching methods based off their responses.

“I learned many valuable life skills from her, like dealing with difficult people and groups, how to be creative in a structured environment, and how to deal with disappointment, said a former student. The experiences that students have in her classroom are enriched because Mrs. Goossens is willing to share about her own life in a way that is teachable and relatable to students.”

In addition to teaching, she serves as Senior Seminar Project Coordinator, coaches varsity volleyball and advises the Business Professionals of America Program (BPA) chapter. The BPA chapter was established by Goossens and the achievements in recent years have been unprecedented. In the last five years, she has led fifty-three state top-ten finishes, state champions, and numerous national top-ten finishes.

“Mrs. Goossens has transformed education in the Business Education department, but even more importantly she has used her gifts to catapult our students toward success after graduation and empowered her colleagues as lifelong learners,” shared Luke Lutterman, principal.

In addition to the Teacher Achievement Award, other educators are being honored with the Academic Challenge Coach Award (teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges), 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 Athletic Coach Award ***(***teachers who are exemplary coaches of athletic teams).

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 2021.

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 and Synergy & Leadership Exchange, visit [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org).