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For immediate release

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## **St. James Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence**

Stephen Chapin, a teacher at St. James Middle/High School in St. James Public Schools, was surprised April 16 with the news that he is a recipient of a 2018 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Teacher Achievement, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Chapin 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 Teacher Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement.

Chapin has been teaching for 22 years and currently teaches health and physical education to high school and middle school students. A big focus for Chapin is hands-on, real-life learning. He created a cooperative project with the school's food service company. After educating 10th-graders on the 'rules' of school nutrition, his students worked with the professionals from the food service company to understand the requirements around creating school meals. Teams of students worked to research and design nutritionally balanced school lunches. Once completed, each team is responsible to work with the cafeteria staff to prepare the meal for more than 500 students in the school. Chapin shares, "This has shown immense benefits including student ownership, working with food service professionals and real-world experiential learning."

"Mr. Chapin tries to keep his students as involved as possible to enhance their learning," a student shared. "Every day there is an activity related to the learning and sometimes the activity consists of having the kids communicate with their parents. Education to Mr. Chapin means opening the door for the student to grow as an individual, but also opening the door for the parents to become involved with their child."

Another initiative Chapin spearheaded is a joint project with the local Mayo Clinic Health System. With guidance and support from Mayo and other local healthcare businesses, Chapin created a hands-on experiential education course entitled "Health Care Career Explorations." This course allows students with direct contact to 14 different aspects of the healthcare system, including working with the local hospital, nursing home, optometrist, chiropractor, dentist, and new this year mortuary science.

"Mr. Chapin models learning for his students and colleagues," said Principal Karla Beck. "He is constantly stretching his own base of knowledge which in turn stretches those around him. When he sees a learning or social/emotional hole within our students he is the first to fill that hole with curriculum or activities."

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 2018. These honorees will be announced in May. 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).