

For immediate release

*For additional information:*  
Leah Garry, Synergy & Leadership Exchange  
Phone: 507-389-5115

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

Caroline Little, a teacher at St. Thomas Academy, a private school in Mendota Heights, was surprised with the news that she is a recipient of a 2019 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Teacher Achievement, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Little 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.

Little has been teaching for 18 years and currently teaches high school French at St. Thomas Academy. She takes great pride in bringing STEM into her French language classroom. Translating commands involves not so much about telling someone to wash their hands or brush their teeth, but more of where to put the solder or how short to cut the wires. Little finds these and other unique ways to marry STEM into the world of language. Her French students hear about the International Space Station and the newest advances in engineering.

“Madame Little combines hands-on, active learning with listening skills as well as written text to create a unique learning environment that my child benefits from,” said a parent. “One of my child’s favorite activities in class was the opportunity to build a robot. All directions and interactions with other students and Madame were done in French. Students in her class learn and enjoy learning.”

Most recently, Little completed more than 50 hours of professional development at NASA's Microgravity University for Educators. She worked with her advisory students to develop and build a Satellite Launching Experimental Device that was tested on the Precision Air Bearing Floor at Johnson Space Center. Little connected with her students during a virtual meeting and showed them how well their SLED design worked. Always thinking of ways to engage others, Little has created a series on Twitter, tweeting out new and original pieces of artwork to connect with people around the world and build excitement for space travel.

“Little’s success is due to her acute ability to understand adolescent and adult learning styles, ability levels and technology comfort levels, as illustrated in her daily interaction with students and faculty at various grade levels,” shared Michelle Mechtel, director of academic life. “She has a warm style that results in being uniformly loved by students, parents and faculty.”

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 2019. 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).