



OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR

Hayley Bunk

For Hayley Bunk, teaching has never been just a job. It is a calling rooted in joy, belonging, and a deep love of learning alongside students.

At 16, Hayley took her first “real job” working summer school and instantly knew she was where she belonged. The joy she felt then—working with kids, learning together, building connections—is the same joy that fuels her work today. While in college, she discovered another passion through coaching Special Olympics, an experience that shaped her approach to teaching, inclusion, and leadership.

A middle school special education teacher, Hayley is known for creating classrooms, and entire school communities, where every student feels seen, respected, and valued. Her students know they matter because she shows up for them every day with consistency, patience, high expectations, grace, and joy.

Hayley believes learning happens everywhere. She makes classrooms accessible, takes students on meaningful field trips, and creates opportunities for students with and without disabilities to learn, lead, and play together.

Her commitment extends far beyond the classroom. She serves as the Unified Champion Schools liaison through Special Olympics at St. Croix Central Middle School. Under her leadership, the school became a National Banner School, joining an elite group recognized for excellence in Unified Sports, Youth Leadership, and Whole-School Engagement. The school was also selected by Special Olympics North America and ESPN as Wisconsin’s first ESPN Honor Roll School.

Hayley also coaches the Unified Ski Team, The Mountain Movers, and facilitates the Unified Champions Youth Leadership Team and Rally Squad. Through Rally Squad, students promote inclusion at athletic events and across the community, building friendships and spreading awareness.

When asked what motivates her, it always comes back to one thing—her students. Watching their confidence grow, celebrating successes big and small, and seeing pride take root, sometimes instantly and sometimes after years of effort, is the greatest gift. Hayley credits her students as her greatest teachers, saying they continually inspire her own growth.

Above all, Hayley hopes her students leave her classroom knowing they are loved, valued, capable of anything, and that they have already made a profound difference in the world and in her life.

Hayley was surprised and humbled to be honored as an Outstanding Educator. She does not see herself as exceptional on her own. Rather, she sees greatness in the students, families, colleagues, and community she is part of. Hayley believes that together, we achieve the most remarkable things.