

 OUTSTANDING  
EDUCATOR

# Keriann Kirkeng



From childhood "pretend school" games to inspiring classrooms filled with creativity, Keriann Kirkeng has always felt drawn to teaching. While the dream started early, it was during high school—surrounded by passionate science, art, and band teachers—that it truly took shape. Their classrooms were places of connection and curiosity, sparking Keriann's lifelong goal of helping students discover their talents, interests, and sense of self.

Teaching since 2011, Keriann has taught art at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She currently serves as a high school art teacher in Lake Mills, where her students explore drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture, photography, and 2D & 3D foundations—all with a focus on building confidence and creative voice.

Connection is at the heart of her classroom. Known for her quirky, genuine personality, Keriann believes that being honest and fully herself gives students permission to do the same. Through open communication and meaningful choice, students take ownership of their work while developing artistic skills, decision-making abilities, and a strong sense of identity as artists.

One of Keriann's favorite aspects of teaching is designing projects that connect students to the community. By engaging with local surroundings and other artists, students see how art can make a meaningful impact. "I love when students feel proud that their art can make a difference in someone else's life."

Keriann continues to grow as an educator through reflective writing, sharing ideas and creative solutions with others in the field. Her work has been published in School Arts Magazine, and writing remains a key tool for reflection and professional growth.

Her biggest motivation comes from her children. She is most proud of her sons and the effort they put into school each day, and she strives to make her district a place they are proud to learn in. Daily motivation also comes from being there for students—whether she's helping choose paint colors or offering encouragement before a nerve-wracking test.

To Keriann, student success isn't about getting it "right." It's about holding up a piece of artwork with pride, rushing to take it home to family, or asking to display it at school or an art show. She hopes students leave her classroom knowing they can make art, that it doesn't have to be perfect to be meaningful, and that their work matters because it's theirs.

Outside the classroom, Keriann mentors Visual Art Classic, National Art Honor Society, and Art Club. In her free time, she enjoys walking her dog, gardening, reading with her book club, and spending time with family—finding inspiration both in and beyond the classroom.