



OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR

Kirk Nichols

Kirk Nichols has been fortunate to have inspiring teachers throughout his own school career, but one stands out among the rest: his kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Landig. Her kind, patient, and caring personality inspired him to become the teacher he is today.

The 2025-2026 school year marks Kirk's eighteenth year in education and his sixteenth year teaching kindergarten.

Kirk strives to make his classroom a welcoming, safe, and structured space where kindness, care, and trust are at the center. He builds connections with his students by truly listening to them and taking time to learn about their lives.

"Kindergarteners are wonderfully honest—they'll even tell you if you're having a bad hair day! Their honesty keeps me on my toes every day, and I love that about them."

No two days in Kirk's classroom are ever the same. The energy, honesty, and spontaneity of his students make every day full of surprises, joy, and learning opportunities. Always looking to grow, he continues to refine his teaching, whether mastering a new curriculum, adopting new classroom management strategies, or experimenting with new engagement techniques.

What motivates Kirk most are the "lightbulb moments," when a student suddenly understands a concept and everything clicks. Seeing that joy never gets old. He takes great pride in the lasting impact he has on students, especially when former students tell him he was their favorite teacher, which is a constant reminder of why he loves what he does.

For Kirk, student success goes beyond academics. It's when a student feels proud of what they've accomplished, through both challenges and achievements. He hopes every student leaves his classroom confident, compassionate, and courageous and equipped not just with knowledge, but with kindness and resilience that will last a lifetime.

When asked about receiving the Outstanding Educator Award, Kirk says. "Teaching is something I pour my heart into every day, so knowing my work has made an impact was truly humbling. My first thought was of my students, their growth, their challenges, and the joy they bring into the classroom. This recognition felt less like an award for me and more like a celebration of what we've accomplished together."

Outside the classroom, Kirk enjoys spending time at his cabin with his husband, Ben, attending Broadway shows, and cherishing moments with family and friends. Kirk and Ben are also obsessed with their mini Bernedoodle, Stanley, whom they proudly call their "best boy."