



## Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA)

2014 Rural Teacher of the Year Award Winner

**Craig Cegielski** | [Eleva-Strum School District](#)



Craig Cegielski, Career and Technical Education Teacher of the Eleva-Strum School District, was honored by the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA), a non-profit organization that is dedicated to

helping address challenges faced by rural school districts, at the annual Rural Schools Conference on Nov. 13, 2014.

When Craig Cegielski first brought his innovative teaching ideas to Eleva-Strum in 2005, he probably never dreamed that he would begin a transformation of technology and engineering education across the state and across the nation. In the years since, the Eleva-Strum Tech Ed classroom has become a self-sustaining and thriving student-run business, called Cardinal Manufacturing, where students earn grades, learn valuable manufacturing and business skills, and receive a paycheck at the end of the course. Students in his class have gone on to become welders, CNC operators, engineers, drafting specialists, construction managers, and entrepreneurs.

Mr. Cegielski models his classroom after actual businesses. In doing so, he has developed partnerships with several companies in Wisconsin and a few from other states, including Michigan, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. Because Cardinal Manufacturing replicates all aspects of a real business, Mr. Cegielski works closely with the district's English, math and business education teachers in



writing product descriptions, creating brochures, and maintaining an up-to-date web page, helping students with measurements, design coordinates, and scaled models, taking orders, invoicing, record keeping, accounting, time sheets, and sales. Mr. Cegielski oversees the entire operation, but the students are the ones who are in the roles of office manager, marketing manager, public relations manager, quality control workers, floor supervisors, machine operators, welders, and a myriad of other positions necessary to run the business.

The number of out-of-school, unpaid hours Mr. Cegielski spends in helping other schools implement such a program is indicative of his passion and commitment to both the teaching profession and the field of manufacturing and locally, Cardinal Manufacturing has become a pride of the citizens of Eleva-Strum.

This state award qualifies Mr. Cegielski as a semi-finalist for the National Rural Education Association Teacher of the Year Program.

The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance was formed to help rural school districts address the unique issues that affect rural schools as they seek to achieve the highest quality education for every student. Members include a cross-section of administrators, educators, school board members, post-secondary representatives, rural community members, business leaders, and other concerned individuals who want a strong voice for rural education.