



Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA) 2018 Rural Teacher of the Year Award



Justin Gerlach | [School District of Mishicot](#)

Justin Gerlach 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 October 29, 2018.

Justin is an outstanding teacher, and life-long learner who seeks to teach students how to form real world connections between his curriculum and the greater community. Justin has modified his role to wear a variety of hats in the district during his fifteen years including HS Biology Teacher, HS and MS Spanish Teacher, HS Agriscience Teacher, Coaching track and cross-country, advising FFA, National Honors Society, and Global Connections. Justin's personal educational philosophy is to develop a love of learning in every student via individualized education developed through strong relationships and industry recognized standards.

Mr. Gerlach works tirelessly to help each student find personal opportunities to grow through hands-on experiments from summer school garden, to forestry programs with local wood crafters to developing deep analytical writing in lab reports and demonstration reviews. In his Agriscience classes, 100% Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) incorporation exist meaning that he ensures every single student performs a minimum of 20 hours of outside of class agriculture related work/learning through internships, job shadows, youth apprenticeships and experimentation. Justin models continual learning in class by debriefing and applying professional development techniques gained from yearly conferences.

Student feedback has most recently allowed Justin the opportunity to help drive a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiative at Mishicot. The STEM focus will only increase his already strong rigor with hard science directly embedded into the curriculum. His work will continue to impact his rural community by saving tax payers and families money through in class and out of class experiences, college credits at the HS level and youth experiences to promote job placement. He and his family truly embody what it means to be a rural school champion!

This state award qualifies also qualifies Mr. Jason Gerlach as a semi-finalist for the National Rural Education Association and Monsanto Teacher of the Year Program.

Other award winners honored by WIRSA at the Rural Schools Conference were Ashley Furniture Industries of Arcadia, Rural Business Partner of the Year; Dan Viste, Southern Door County School District, Rural Support Staff Person of the Year; Steve Pate of Portage, Rural Board of Education Member of the Year; Bryce Bird, District Administrator of the Riverdale School District, Rural Administrator of the Year; and Heather DuBois Bourenane, Executive Director of WPEN, Rural Advocacy Award.

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.