

## MEDIA RELEASE



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## OAK RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP, ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES NAMED 2020 STEM INNOVATION AWARD WINNER

(Roseville, MN – Dec. 19, 2019)—Oak Ridge Elementary School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences, located in Eagan, MN and a member of District 196, has been named the winner of the 2020 STEM Innovation Award. Principal Cathy Kindem and STEM Specialist Tanner Walters applied for the award on behalf of Oak Ridge Elementary School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences.



Oak Ridge Elementary School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences is in its fourth year as a magnet school focusing on developing new systems to increase academic success in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). They have accomplished that through developing innovative opportunities for their learners outside their traditional classroom. These opportunities include a STEM specialist course, additional before, during, and after school STEM classes, Engineering nights, student STEM leaders, and their new STEM to Go! Kits (*pictured below*).

“At Oak Ridge, we are eager to offer unique opportunities to support the reduction of racial and gender bias in STEM. As a leadership magnet school, we want to cultivate the talent in all learners,” Kindem and Walters wrote in their application. “STEM to GO! Kits ensure access to STEM equipment and experiences to build confidence and for all to have the opportunity to become science and technology leaders.”

Their STEM specialist, Tanner Walters, exposes students to a



wide variety of STEM-focused activities which integrate their current unit of study from their classroom with our magnet theme. There are many examples of STEM themed projects specific to grade levels. 5th grade students learn about ecosystems through invasive buckthorn species found on campus and help develop plans to remove them. They also learn to code EV3 robots in STEM class to sort recyclable and non-recyclable waste on a course created in art class. The 3rd graders use circuitry to design their own star constellations to learn about astronomy, and 4th grade might learn about hydrology through testing pond water on campus and developing ways to purify it.



The STEM Innovation Award is presented in partnership between the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) and the Science Museum of Minnesota. The award gives principals the opportunity to share innovative programs and/or projects in their schools. An "innovation database," created from entries for the award, is made available to MESPA members, helping schools across the state replicate their colleagues' successes.

The impressive applications for this year's award, showcased the breadth and depth of innovation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) taking place in schools across Minnesota.

Oak Ridge Elementary School of Leadership, Environmental and Health Sciences will be recognized at the MESPA Institute awards celebration – The MESPYS – in Bloomington, MN on February 6, 2020. Larry Thomas, Director of Lifelong Learning at the Science Museum of Minnesota, will present the award. In addition, the Science Museum of Minnesota will provide a \$300 certificate towards an education program for Oak Ridge Elementary.

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The **Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association** is dedicated to promoting and improving education for children and youth, strengthening the role as educational leader for elementary and middle level principals and collaborating with partners in education to assist in achieving those goals. For more information, visit the association's website at [www.mespa.net](http://www.mespa.net).

The **Science Museum of Minnesota** has a 100-year history of bringing science learning to life through hands-on exhibits, giant screen films, and unparalleled educational opportunities for all ages. For more information about the wide range of education programs for school groups, teachers, kids, families, and adults, visit the museum's website at [www.smm.org/educationprograms/](http://www.smm.org/educationprograms/).