

## Science, community collaboration earn educator UWO recognition

by Tim Holdsworth - Wednesday, August 28, 2013

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/29031/science-community-collaboration-earn-educator-uwo-recognition/>

Connecting classroom experiences in science with real-world, problem-based learning is second nature for Oliver Schinkten '03, who has earned a University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Outstanding Young Alumni Award.

A grade 6-8 science teacher and science club director at Merrill Middle School in Oshkosh, Schinkten continually seeks ways to provide his students access to real-life applications and connect classroom experiences to post-secondary education options and careers.

For science club, he received two grants that funded a water quality testing project and study of the UW Oshkosh biodigester. The projects, for which Schinkten partnered with UWO, earned the club multiple requests for the students to present their findings to local schools and several local community organizations.

“These projects provided the students a real-world opportunity to ‘do’ science, to be a part of a larger body of scientific work, to share their work and to realize how fulfilling science can be,” said UW Oshkosh Director of Science Outreach Reynee Kachur, who collaborated on both projects with the science club.

Schinkten has also been the driving force in the creation a pilot school within Oshkosh North High School called Communities.

Developed with three other Oshkosh Area School District educators, Communities is a school-within-a-school that focuses on a project-based, interdisciplinary curriculum.

The school model operates by connecting teachers with a community member or other local organization who presents a problem that needs to be solved. The teacher then finds curricular connections to work the problem into lessons and the students work together to find solutions.

“Oliver attended conferences and site visits wherever possible, often using his own resources to research best practices. He and the team spent inordinate amounts of time preparing philosophy and curriculum,” said Holly Rottier, former Oshkosh Area School District director of assessment and school improvement. “In difficult times during the planning, his passion and positivity helped carry the team through to find success.”

Beyond his classroom responsibilities, Schinkten has organized and implemented a family [STEM \(science, technology, engineering and math\) night](#) that included five local schools, participated in development of the Science Common Core Standards and coaches basketball and boy's track at Merrill.

Even with all these accomplishments, perhaps the highest compliment for teacher is comes in the words of their students.

“He is, to put it simply, a fantastic teacher. His methods of teaching, while sometime unorthodox, are nonetheless effective and always fun for the students,” said Oshkosh North High School student Caitlin Patton. “He cares for all of his students, and is always willing to put in the time and effort to make sure each one of them is able to succeed.”

The Alumni Awards Dinner will be held beginning at 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 11 in Reeve Memorial Union. Reserve your spot at the event by calling (920) 424-3349 or sending an email to [alumni@uwosh.edu](mailto:alumni@uwosh.edu). Tickets are \$30 per person.

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