

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Teacher Blair Fitzsimons Awarded the 2020 Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in STEM

Kemptville, ON (Friday, October 9, 2020) – The [Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario](#) is pleased to announce that Blair Fitzsimons, a teacher at St. Mary-St. Cecilia Catholic School (Morrisburg), has been awarded a Regional Certificate of Achievement for the 2020 Prime Minister's Award (PMA) for Teaching Excellence in STEM. Having a teacher win a PMA is a tremendous honour and a proud moment for the CDSBEO and St. Mary-St. Cecilia Catholic School.

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence have honoured exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines since 1994. Teaching Excellence Awards recipients are honoured for their remarkable achievements in education and for their commitment to preparing their students for a digital and innovation-based economy. The Teaching Excellence in STEM Awards honour outstanding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics teachers that help develop a culture of innovation.

Fitzsimons can often be heard saying, "I don't teach robotics, I use robotics to teach English, social studies, collaboration or resiliency." Technology is never the focus for his lessons but has been a critical part of every learning journey. He encourages students to share ideas and ask each other, "How did you do that?" - creating a community of learners, where every student is valued. Students discover answers for themselves and learn that there is no single "right" answer. In the process of learning, they realize that they can innovate.

With a passion for teaching that is infectious, Fitzsimons also inspires his colleagues. He has earned a solid reputation as an education leader and facilitator, who often collaborates and learns innovative teaching methods that help to change the way students view learning experiences. His presence at the school has been described as transformative – his teaching has students engage in real-world challenges, appealing to all students, not just those who love technology. He is sure to let learners know that there can be success through failure, which can lead to better ideas and inspire collaboration through problem solving.

To date, Fitzsimons has accrued many outstanding achievements which include the development of an edible alternative to plastic hay-bale twine with his First Lego League team (which now holds a patent), the development of multi-school STEM learning camps whereby students guide their peers through hands-on challenges, and the creation of a website to share innovative ways to teach STEM using Lego (www.onebrickatatime.ca). He has also partnered with school administration to successfully garner over \$70,000 in grant funding to support technology purchases and professional development.

News Release

"The Board is extremely blessed to have an amazing educator like Mr. Fitzsimons on our team," noted Chair, Todd Lalonde. "We are extremely proud of his outstanding achievements as an innovative educator and wish him our most sincere congratulations on receiving this exceptional award."

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario operates 39 elementary and 10 secondary schools across eight counties. The CDSBEO offers excellence in Catholic education through provincial-leading programs to approximately 13,100 students.

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Attached Photo: Blair Fitzsimons.jpg

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