



## Boards Making a Difference

### Le Mars Board Eyes 20th Team Achievement Award in 2020

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For the past 19 years, the Le Mars school board has placed a high priority on learning and high expectations for students and staff. District leadership believes lifelong learning results in a well-informed and high-functioning board that does what's best for students.

“When you come on the board, you feel pressure right away. When I came on the board 10 years ago, those board members pulled me off to the side and told me here's what we do and why we do it. No matter if the president changes, the goal of the board is still education. We do feel the pressure to keep it up,” said Board President Scott Kommes.

Let's put this board's commitment into perspective. They are one of four board teams who earned the Team Achievement Award in 2018-19, and they are the winningest team in the history of IASB's Better Boardsmanship Awards.

How exactly does a board earn this award? A majority of its board members must earn Individual Award of Achievement certificates for the year, AND the board must have a policy in place that supports board development. Individual board members are eligible to receive an Individual Achievement Award certificate for earning a minimum of 125 credits in one year. These credits can be earned through attending IASB learning events like conferences, workshops, webinars, podcasts, as well as demonstrated leadership, advocacy and service.

As a board made up of volunteers, many of whom have jobs, families and other volunteer gigs, how can board



*Le Mars Team Achievement Award Photo, 2019.*



*Le Mars Team Achievement Award Photo, 2018.*

members possibly earn this many credits per year? According to the Le Mars board, it's become a tradition.

"It feels like sports playoffs. I don't want to let anyone down! I'm going to do my part to keep this going. I hope board members don't want to stop, I hope our current board and future boards can keep the tradition going for years to come," said Kommes.

Attending IASB, NSBA and other professional development opportunities pertinent to the role is an expectation of the board. Leading up to school elections, candidates are informed of the events they should attend if they win.

"It's an expectation that when you get on this board, in order to be the best board member you can be, you'll take advantage of these things. Our board members drive the expectation. For the most part, a huge majority of our board members every year believe that taking advantage of these opportunities is a high priority," said Superintendent Steve Webner.

There have been years where the deadline is looming and some board members are not close to the minimum number of credits to earn the award. Rather than give up, they continue the tradition of winning by watching webinars over the lunch hour, participating in At the Board Table trainings, and other online learning that offers 5-10 points.

"It's the pressure you feel that you can't let your other board members down. We keep tabs on where we are. Everyone has the attitude—I'm going to do it. We really want all seven board members to earn the Individual Award. It's like another appointment on our calendar, and we just go do it," said Kommes.

The board believes it should model lifelong learning not only for students, but also for staff and administrators. When the board learns together, it is a high-functioning board. Whether it's through creating a vision, developing shared beliefs, being accountability driven or analyzing data, the board is well versed and makes strong decisions due in large part to education.

"Being a high-functioning board is the role model we strive to be, and that comes from being lifelong learners. Our students, staff and administrators may not see our photo in the paper after we're awarded the Team Achievement Award each year, but they see what we're doing through our actions. It's a top down thing, being a high-functioning board impacts the rest of the district and how it functions," said Webner.



*Le Mars Team Achievement Award Photo, 2015.*



*Le Mars Team Achievement Award Photo, 2011.*

There are times though when community members, students and staff do see the board's photo in the paper, which creates a buzz, an understanding, and an appreciation of the hard work and hours the board puts in, all for no pay. We have no doubt the Le Mars board will be in the paper for the 20th Team Achievement Award in 2020.

[\*\*Meet the Le Mars School Board\*\*](#)