**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Patrick Getchis Awarded as a 2021 Oregon Teacher of the Year Runner-up**

The Oregon Department of Education, in partnership with the Oregon Lottery, is pleased to celebrate Wy‘east Middle School’s STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) teacher, Patrick Getchis, as a 2021 Teacher of the Year Runner-up, and award both Patrick and his school with a $2,000 cash prize!

"This year, due to distance learning and the transformation that happened in education, he is teaching math and science and the more traditional subjects, and even what he's doing there is extraordinary,” said Sarah Braman-Smith, principal of Wy‘east Middle School. “To step outside of the demanding world he was in and to quickly shift to this and be a support for his colleagues just speaks to how he truly is a Teacher of the Year. And it's not just this year, it extends to the moment I met him."

Getchis has been teaching at Wy‘east Middle School for 5 of his 15 total years in education and founded the Wy‘east Middle School Robotics program by writing grants and coordinating with mentors and coaches. Since then, Wy‘east has won three state robotics championships. Getchis also co-led additional STEM projects which have included a biodiesel reactor and solar cell phone chargers.

In the runner-up celebration, Getchis noted the importance of having spaces and outlets like the Wy‘east Middle School Robotics program to allow students to have access to hands-on learning. "I'd love to see more support for Makerspaces in schools throughout this state. 11-13 year old kids are the right target. They are either going to engage or not. It's a pretty decent platform to structure a window in their day where they can get their wiggles out and also tinker with engineering."

The pivotal role of teachers – and Getchis’ approach -- has become especially evident in these last several months as schools have transitioned to distance learning in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers have stepped up in countless, innovative ways to ensure students are safe, healthy and engaged to reach their full potential, making this a fitting opportunity to recognize the excellence of teachers throughout the state.

Anyone can nominate a teacher! If you know an outstanding educator nominate them today at [OregonTeacheroftheYear.org](https://oregonteacheroftheyear.org/).