



**Outstanding  
Ag Ed  
Teacher**

**Eric Sawatzke**

West Central Area

*"I teach for life impacting knowledge. We only spend the very first part of our lives having someone else teach us directly and from then on, it is up to us to learn, as life throws everything it can at us."*

## Overview

- Eric has taught for 15 years, with 6 years at West Central Area, serving a student body of 360 students grades 7-12
- Career readiness and hunger solutions are pillars of the WCA ag program utilizing a hydroponic system, tower gardens, 24 apple tree orchard and a mobile meat processing trailer
- The FFA chapter focuses heavily on service learning

## Experiential Learning

- All students enrolled in Ag Ed Classes at WCA complete an SAE project, Students work on school-based SAE projects throughout the each in the greenhouse
- Eric supervises the Work based learning program
- Last year, 42 chapter proficiency applications were completed

## Professional Growth

- Eric is CASE certified in AFNR and Ag Business Foundations
- Served on the MAAE officer team and NAAE finance committee
- Assisted in writing a bill and securing \$350,000 to provide funding to high school meat processing programs
- Selected as one of 25 educators worldwide to participate in a global guides program that focused on food security

## Student Organizations

- Chapter FFA members participate in Grant County Safety Day, Urban Ag Day, Thank a Farmer Meal and 4th grade safety day
- Has had 7 CDE teams or individuals compete at the National FFA Convention
- Helped coordinate 4 international trips for FFA programs
- Eric has worked for 22 years at the Miracle of Birth Center

## Partnerships

- Raised over \$350,000 in grants and donations for a greenhouse from local businesses, civic groups and alumni
- Was awarded \$378,000 from the USDA to purchase a mobile meat processing lab shared with WCA and Ashby Ag Ed
- Hosts as coffee and corduroy once every other month to hear updates about the program and his FFA officer team

*"Eric has demonstrated the knowledge, skills and problem solving qualities that a teacher/program leader needs, he develops a quick and warm rapport and creates meaningful and engaging plans– a great combination to have!"*

*-Jessica Holland– Principal West Central Area Schools*

**2023 MAAE Award Winner**