

2023 OKSTE Awards

Technology Leader of the Year: Brandon Chitty

Brandon Chitty is a passionate educator who has been working at Broken Arrow Public Schools for 16 years, currently serving as the Executive Director of Instructional Technology and Virtual Programs. He has been happily married for 20 years with two amazing children with a love of spending time with his family and enjoying life to its fullest. As an educator, He is excited about the future of education and creating a positive and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive. He is committed to providing the best possible education to prepare students for success in whatever the next chapter of life holds.

“Making IT Happen” OKSTE Teacher of the Year: Sara Estep

The winner of the Making IT Happen – OKSTE Teacher of the Year is Sara Estep. She graduated from TU with a bachelor’s in applied sciences. After a career as a programmer, she began teaching high school and has taught for a total of 18 years. Currently, Sara is a BMITE Career Tech Teacher at Tahlequah High School. Her classes cover Fundamentals of Technology, Fundamentals of Administrative Technology, Careers, and Drones. Prior to coming to Tahlequah, she taught computer courses at Central High School in Tulsa Public Schools for two years then taught at the Jenks Freshman Academy for 10 years.

She has taught in Urban, Rural, and Elite school settings. Sara has taught Computers (MS Office and Google Apps), Business and Entrepreneurship, Drones Technology, Computer Animation, and Personal Finance and Careers over the years. She also sponsors the Tahlequah Business Professionals of America chapter (BPA).

Five years ago, she started a Drone program at Tahlequah. She obtained \$22,000 in grants and funding to assist with the program which focuses on how drones can be applied in different industries.

When not teaching, she spends time with her Marine Veteran husband and two children. One attends OSU while the other is in the medical field. She loves spoiling her two dogs, camping, hiking, kayaking, and boating on Lake Tenkiller.

Outstanding Technology Integration District: Bristow Public Schools

Bristow Public Schools, like other small, rural Oklahoma districts, has had to navigate and continually overcome many EdTech challenges which includes lack of funding as well as connectivity issues that are unique to our rural areas. Although the infusion of technology can be more challenging in a rural district, Bristow has overcome these challenges. The district is fortunate to have had 20 plus years of administrators who have envisioned the benefit of remaining proactive in all matters relating to technology. The district’s philosophy has been to provide a more than adequate infrastructure and equip students and staff with current technologies. The most important component and key to Bristow's success, however, has been to provide ongoing support for their staff through innumerable professional development and

on-demand coaching opportunities so that teachers, no matter how proficient, are comfortable using the technology provided. The district's unwavering expectation of EdTech in every classroom and the opportunities it affords our students resonates in every decision made by the district. Through this intentional focus, BPS has laid a solid foundation upon which all future educational technologies can be built. Accepting this award on behalf of Bristow Public Schools is Michelle Henderson, (who submitted the application), Superintendent, Curtis Shelton, and Assistant Superintendent, Krista Burden.

OKSTE Friend of Technology: Eric Hileman

Eric Hileman, longtime OKSTE Board of Directors member and past president is being honored today as the OKSTE Friend of Technology. Eric's leadership not only in Oklahoma but nationally is exemplary. He has served as the Chairperson for the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) **which** is the principal association representing U.S. state and territorial educational technology and digital learning leaders. OKSTE is the state affiliate for SETDA. Julia Fallon, Executive Director of SETDA, sent these remarks about Eric:

*We are writing to express our wholehearted support for **Eric Hileman**, who is being recognized as an **OKSTE Friend of Technology**. As SETDA and board colleagues, we have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand Eric's remarkable qualities and contributions to the field of educational technology.*

Eric possesses extraordinary leadership capabilities that have benefitted fellow state leaders and SETDA throughout his tenure as an active member and board chair. His impact extends to the local level as well. Eric has cultivated a strong culture among diverse team members, effectively addressing both the technical and human aspects of running an exemplary K-12 technology operation for an expansive district.

What truly drives Eric's work and results is a profound passion for students and teachers, as well as a deep belief in the potential of digital tools and approaches to personalize learning. His curiosity leads him to continuously inquire about the "why" behind our technology plans, scaling strategies, and usage in schools. He remains laser-focused on achieving positive outcomes for Oklahoma Public Schools and SETDA, with a relentless drive to ensure that technology investments strengthen and unite all members of the education community.

Eric's dedication to this cause is unwavering, and his insights are invaluable in the ever-evolving landscape of educational technology. His kind heart, superlative intelligence, and commitment to making a positive impact on the educational experience of students and teachers are truly commendable. His sense of humor and human touch, which adds warmth to the sometimes cold world of technology, sets him apart as a remarkable leader.