



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

Jon Zlock
Kathryn Forsyth, Director
609-292-1126

For Release: October 11, 2006

Two Teachers Recognized with \$25,000 Milken National Educator Awards

Two outstanding New Jersey teachers received National Educator Awards and \$25,000 checks from the Milken Family Foundation at two separate special assemblies this morning in South Jersey.

Tonya Breland, a former fourth-grade teacher and current literacy coach at Fountain Woods Elementary School in Burlington, and Carla Bittner, a fourth-grade teacher at Evergreen Avenue Elementary School in Woodbury were recognized for their talent, dedication and care for their students and school communities.

"Both of these teachers are perfect role models for their peers across the state," said acting Commissioner Lucille E. Davy. "Anytime we can recognize excellence in the classroom, we jump at the opportunity. Mrs. Breland and Mrs. Bittner are doing their part to ensure our students are prepared as they rise through school and enter into the 21st century workforce. We are extremely proud of them."

This year, the Milken Family Foundation is celebrating its 20th year of honoring the important roles talented teachers play in improving student achievement. Up to 100 outstanding elementary educators are learning the news this fall.

Called the "Oscars of Teaching" by *Teacher Magazine*, the Milken National Educator Awards were created by Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-Founder Lowell Milken to celebrate, elevate and activate the highest caliber professionals in our nation's schools.

This is the fifth year that New Jersey has taken part in the awards program.

Breland has a bachelor's degree from Howard University and a master's degree from Nova Southeastern University. She has been a teacher for six years and is currently a member of both the Burlington Township Schools' Equity Team and the Language Arts Vertical Articulation Team.

"Mrs. Breland is sensitive, caring, understanding, personable, and a real team leader," said Kelley Borreggine, a language arts supervisor. "Mrs. Breland always goes the extra mile with the well-being of the students, staff and school in mind."

Bittner has a bachelor's degree in education and Spanish from Houghton College. She was her school's first multi-age classroom teacher for grades three and four. Colleagues describe her as a "high-energy" person.

"She is what we want and need in our schools - that combination of intellect, drive, humor and compassion," said Frances Carey, her principal. "The kids love her and she continually moves them forward."

Active in 48 states and the District of Columbia, the Milken Educator Awards have grown to become the nation's largest teacher recognition program.

"Good teachers are the linchpin in our education system playing a critical role in propelling student learning," said Lowell Milken, chairman and CEO of the foundation. "Every child deserves to be in a classroom with a teacher who inspires, illustrates and advances excellence. It's imperative that as a nation we recognize the importance of outstanding teachers and encourage young, talented people to choose teaching as a career."

Since 1987, more than \$56 million has been awarded to more than 2,200 educators. The Milken Educator Network expands the list of recipients who are awarded each year to not only include exceptional teachers, but other influential leaders as well, such legislators, school boards and others who are shaping the future of education.

Unlike most teaching awards, the Milken Educator Awards have no formal nomination or application process. Educators are recommended for this prestigious honor without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's Department of Education.

Candidates for the Milken Educator Awards are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;

- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards and the surprise notification events held throughout the United States, please contact the Milken Family Foundation at (310) 570-4775 or visit www.mff.org.

For additional information about today's awards, please contact Jon Zlock of the Department of Education's Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.