

NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

Dr. Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner



EMBARGOED until:

Contact: Tom Murphy 203.640.5515

9:00 a.m., Monday, October 27, 2008

MILKEN FAMILY FOUNDATION AWARD

State Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan visited the Church Street School in Hamden on Monday to present a National Educator Award to an unsuspecting Grace Griffin – a Grades 4 and 5 elementary teacher – in recognition of her outstanding work in the classroom and beyond.

Griffin has been nominated and selected for this honor without her knowledge, thus the Commissioner's visit and the award – which includes an unrestricted gift of \$25,000 from the California-based Milken Family Foundation—came as a complete surprise.

Commissioner McQuillan said, "Teaching is a calling; it is hard work and it takes great patience, skill, ability and commitment. I am delighted to help bring attention to this good work and to one of Connecticut's best."

Governor M. Jodi Rell said, "This award helps us to remember how vital our teachers are to our success as a state. The work they do is the most important public service. There are thousands of teachers who make great contributions every day in the lives of Connecticut's children. I extend my congratulations to Ms. Griffin for this well-deserved honor; she is clearly a gifted educator and an exemplar of the profession."

Grace Griffin, who holds a masters degree in education, has been a teacher at Church Street School since 1999. Ms. Griffin collaborated with team members to align the math and language arts curriculum with state standards and assessments. As a result, the percent of fifth graders at or above proficiency on the state math assessment rose to 83% and has been sustained for 2 years. The percent of students at or above proficiency in writing rose to 77% and reading from 48% to 61 %. Results like these for a Title I school are directly related to high quality teaching. Ms. Griffin goes far above and beyond her classroom duties to increase student learning. She consistently puts in extra time to involve the entire school community in her projects. A talent show, World's Fair, Chess Club, Dance Club, Connecticut Mastery Test Club and a field trip to New York City are just a few examples of initiatives that Ms. Griffin has organized.

Church Street Elementary School is one of eight elementary schools in Hamden. It is located in the southern section of Hamden, contiguous to New Haven. The school has been a focal point in the community for over 75 years. A flexible-space building was constructed on the original site in 1990 to meet changing enrollment needs. A Family Resource Center helps to expand the services and

educational opportunities to children and families. Programs include a pre-K readiness/daycare class, parent and child playgroups, weekend and evening literacy initiatives, adult education classes in computer, English as a Second Language and obtaining a high school diploma. The school has an outstanding staff of high energy teachers and support personnel committed to providing excellent learning opportunities for children. Enrollment 385 students, Grades K-6

Website: <http://www.hamden.k12.ct.us/page.cfm?p=168>



Milken Family Foundation 2008 National Educator Awards Fact Sheet

The Awards

The largest teacher recognition program in the U.S., the Milken National Educator Awards, most commonly known as the Milken Educator Awards, provide public recognition and an unrestricted financial award of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists who are furthering excellence in education. Each Milken Educator also receives an all-expenses-paid trip to Los Angeles, California, to participate in the annual Milken National Education Conference held each spring.

Key Statistics Including 2008 Recipients

- Established by the Milken Family Foundation
- Up to 80 new Milken Educators from across the U.S.
- First Awards presented in 1987
- More than 2,300 Milken Educator Award recipients since inception
- Over \$60 million in Awards since inception
- Awards alternate yearly between elementary and secondary educators

22nd Annual National Notifications

During the annual National Notifications tour across the country, which begins in October, up to 80 exceptional teachers, principals and specialists – recommended without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each participating state's department of education – will be surprised by the news of their \$25,000 Awards, which can be used in any way they wish. Each year, newly selected recipients are taken completely by surprise at schoolwide assemblies. With an entourage of distinguished officials and media, a Foundation representative or the state chief of education typically notifies the recipient, often accompanied by the governor and other state and federal leaders.

Milken Educator Network

The Milken Educator Network is a voluntary association of more than 2,300 Milken Educators and other exemplary educators and business leaders from across the country, whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education.

Milken Family Foundation

The Milken Family Foundation was established in 1982 to discover and advance inventive and effective ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The Santa Monica, California-based foundation advances this mission primarily through its work in education and medical research.

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