

NEWS

Connecticut State Department of Education

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Education Commissioner Visits Outstanding Connecticut Teacher and Bestows Surprise \$25,000 Milken National Educator Award

State Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan visited the Metropolitan Learning Center in Bloomfield on Wednesday to present a National Educator Award to an unsuspecting Thomas Brodnitzki – a high school Social Studies teacher – in recognition of his outstanding work in the classroom and beyond.

Brodnitzki had been nominated and selected for this honor without his 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 Mr. Brodnitzki for this well-deserved honor; he is clearly a gifted educator and an exemplar of the profession.”

Mr. Brodnitzki, who holds two masters degrees, has been a social studies teacher at the Metropolitan Learning Center since 2001. He teaches Geography, U.S. History, World Religions, International Studies, East Asian Studies, AP Human Geography, and Emerging Civil Societies. He likes to say he is a “facilitator of student learning,” which reflects his approach in the classroom. He has worked with fellow teachers on teaching interdisciplinary writing to students in preparation for the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). He has won a Fulbright award to go to China, a National Geographic Award for the summer institute in Washington, D.C., a fellowship to participate in the Mount Vernon Institute and an Amistad America Award.

The Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies (MLC), managed by the Capitol Region Education Council, is a magnet school in partnership with six urban and suburban school districts. The school’s goal is to graduate students who possess the knowledge, skills and habits

of mind necessary to work and live in the 21st century global environment. There is an emphasis on world languages and state-of-the-art technology. The school is housed in a state-of-the-art facility with wireless network capability and provides every student with a laptop computer. MLC serves as a model for the complete integration of technology into the learning environment. Partnerships with Yale University, UNESCO, iEARN, local businesses and international corporations provide expanded learning opportunities through job shadowing, internships, travel foreign study and hosting of international visitors. Enrollment: 700, Grades 6-12

Web site: <http://www.crec.org/magnetschools/schools/met/>

Milken Educator Awards

Overview

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards program provides public recognition and financial rewards to elementary and secondary schoolteachers, principals and other education professionals who are furthering excellence in education. By honoring outstanding educators, the program strives to attract, develop, motivate and retain talented people to the challenge and adventure of teaching.

In the early 1980s, education reform pioneer [Lowell Milken](#) conceived and created an awards program to acknowledge educators' crucial contributions to our national well-being. His main belief was—and is—that an effective way to advance the teaching profession is to reward educators' achievements, enhance their resources, and expand their professional interests.

From its original presentation of awards to a dozen California educators, the program has grown to national stature. By the end of the 2007–08 school year, over 2,300 outstanding kindergarten-through-12th-grade educators [across the United States](#) will have been recognized and celebrated with unrestricted, individual Milken Educator Awards of \$25,000 since the Award's inception.

The Milken Educator Awards are announced each year at exciting surprise notifications held in all-school assemblies, attended by thousands of students all across the country. Foundation representatives and the chief state school officer make the Award announcements in the company of federal, state and local dignitaries, often including the governor or first lady.

The electronic and print media presence at the notifications is essential in publicizing excellence in education. Policymakers and their constituencies, the private sector, and social agencies working to better their communities are reminded of the critical, positive impact of educators. Furthermore, spreading the news of the Awards seeks to attract talented people, young and older alike, to the American teaching profession.

The Foundation presents the financial awards to new honorees during a gala celebration held at the annual Milken Family Foundation [National Education Conference](#). This inspirational gathering, whose guests include state and federal government officials as well as influential community, business and education leaders, generates widespread recognition for America's finest educators.