



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

For Immediate Release:

October 19, 2016

Contact: Abbe Smith 860.713.6525

Jana Rausch: (310) 570-4774 (office); (310) 435-9259 (cell); jrausch@mff.org

Connecticut First-Grade Teacher Manny Zaldivar Surprised with \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

English Learner Leader at Smalley Academy in New Britain helps students and colleagues excel

(NEW BRITAIN, CT) — At Smalley Academy in New Britain, Connecticut, Manuel “Manny” Zaldivar has a gift for educating English Language Learners and bringing out the best in his colleagues. Today he received a \$25,000 thank-you at a surprise all-school assembly before cheering students, respected colleagues, distinguished officials and the media. The cash prize is part of the Milken Educator Award, a prestigious national recognition that will be presented to up to 35 teachers, principals and specialists for the 2016-17 year.

This season marks the 30th year of the Milken Educator Awards, hailed by *Teacher* magazine as the “Oscars of Teaching.”

Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley announced the award for Zaldivar, joined by Connecticut Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell and Consolidated School District of New Britain Superintendent Nancy Sarra. Zaldivar is Connecticut’s sole recipient of the Milken Educator Award this season.

“Manny Zaldivar is the kind of teacher who has high expectations for all of his students and helps them rise to their potential,” said Wentzell. “He is able to draw from his own experiences as an English learner to inspire and empower young English language learners in the classroom to believe in their ability to succeed. From parent engagement to teacher mentorship, Mr. Zaldivar is an educator who goes above and beyond. We congratulate Mr. Zaldivar, Smalley Academy and New Britain on this well-deserved honor.”

“Manny Zaldivar is a respected leader with a can-do attitude,” said Foley. “These characteristics are reflected in Mr. Zaldivar’s first-grade classroom, where he instills high expectations and values that put his students on a path to excel in school and in life. His talents—from guiding English Language Learners to sharing instructional best practices schoolwide—make him worthy of the Milken Educator Award.”

In addition to teaching in the classroom and serving as the school’s first-grade team leader, Zaldivar heads the English Language Development (ELD) team at Smalley, a diverse K-5 school in New Britain where 89% of students are on a free- or reduced-price lunch program. A native Spanish speaker, Zaldivar writes ELD curriculum, coaches colleagues, manages and interprets the school’s ELD data, and presents his findings to staff, administrators and the board of education. At the district level, he is recognized as a leader of implementing

the ELD model and is expected to take on coaching responsibilities to broaden its impact. His students are thriving: The first-graders showed a 21% increase in those reading at or above grade level in recent NWEA MAP (Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress) assessments. The ELLs in Zaldivar's class often exit ELD classes entirely after just one year with him.

Soft-spoken yet firm, Zaldivar does not shy away from hard conversations and is known to forge strong relationships with students, families and staff. He leads workshops to help parents support their children's learning, sits on the school's Positive Behavior Intervention and Support team, and is a mentor in Connecticut's Teacher Education And Mentoring (TEAM) program. He has led professional development programs on effective classroom management, sharing strategies like the call-and-response auditory signals he uses to transition students between classroom activities. Zaldivar mentors early career teachers and is a role model for younger staff members.

Zaldivar chairs Smalley's Multicultural Committee, planning and implementing activities that highlight cultures around the world. He created the school's first Museum Walk, in which each grade researched and presented projects related to different countries and their cultures. Zaldivar is on the school's "walk-through" team, on which teachers and administrators observe teachers in action in order to recognize strong practices and identify areas that need additional support. Before Smalley, Zaldivar taught at Family Life Academy Charter School in the Bronx (New York). He arrived at Family Life Academy during a challenging school-restructuring transition and quickly became a steady, valued team member, transforming his grade-level team into an effective unit.

Zaldivar earned a Bachelor of Science in computer system and management applications in 2004 from Fordham University and a Master of Science in childhood education in 2007 from Lehman College at the City University of New York. In 2016, he completed administrator certification from Sacred Heart University.

More information about Zaldivar, plus links to photos and a video from today's assembly, can be found on the Milken Educator Awards website at <http://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/manuel-zaldivar>.

Milken Educators are selected in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. In addition to the \$25,000 prize and public recognition, Zaldivar's honor includes membership in the National Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,700 top principals, teachers and specialists dedicated to strengthening education.

More than \$138 million in funding, including \$68 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall Awards program, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers. Many have gone on to earn advanced degrees and be placed in prominent posts and on state and national education committees.

The Awards alternate yearly between elementary and secondary educators. Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Awards has no formal nomination or application process. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then reviewed by blue ribbon panels appointed by state departments of education. Those most exceptional are recommended for the Award, with final approval by the Milken Family Foundation.

Past recipients have used their Awards to fund their children's education or their own continuing education. Others have financed dream field trips, established scholarships and even funded the adoption of children.

To get regular updates on the surprise Milken Educator Award events, follow and use the #MilkenAward hashtag on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For more information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org or call MFF at (310) 570-4772.

###

CONTACT: Abbe Smith, Director of Communications
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-381-7096
Email: Abbe.Smith@ct.gov