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Minnesota Teacher Receives \$25,000 National Milken Educator Award

Jennifer Mitchell of Minneapolis Received the "Oscars of Teaching" During Surprise Ceremonies

Minneapolis, MN (November 16, 2010)— A seemingly routine schoolwide assembly turned into the surprise of a lifetime when the Milken Family Foundation honored—and stunned—Jennifer Mitchell, a K-3rd grade English and language teacher at Sojourner Truth Academy, with a Milken Educator Award. One of education's most prestigious recognitions, each Award comes with a nostrings-attached cash prize of \$25,000. Dr. Jane Foley, Foundation Senior Vice President, Milken Educator Awards, and Alice Seagren, Minnesota's Commissioner of Education, were among the leaders participating in the surprise celebration.

Dubbed "the Oscars of teaching" by Teacher Magazine, the Milken Educator Awards program was conceived by Lowell Milken to recognize the importance of outstanding educators and encourage talented young people to enter the teaching profession. Unlike most teaching awards, the Milken Educator Awards have no formal nomination or application process. Each year exceptional teachers, principals and specialists—recommended without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's department of education—are surprised with the news of their awards.

"Our society's most important profession is teaching, as it informs all others," said Lowell Milken, chairman and co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation. "We created the Milken Educator Awards to proclaim in a very public way that greatness in education must be recognized and rewarded. Jennifer Mitchell embodies this message intended for entire communities, policymakers, students who may be inspired to enter the profession, and for our nation's K-12 educators themselves."

Jennifer Mitchell is a solutions-oriented leader at Sojourner Truth Academy in Minneapolis, Minn., highly regarded for her impact on students, parents and professional peers as a master teacher with TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement. An expert at evaluating achievement and differentiating instruction to maximize comprehension for each student, Mitchell maintains direct contact with parents and helps fellow instructors with parent meetings. Additionally, Mitchell developed her own individual growth plan in the areas of student achievement, cultural responsiveness and collaboration and leadership—a strategy that has borne fruit for students and staff alike.

Thanks to Mitchell's zealous efforts, Sojourner Truth has reported impressive achievement gains. When she started at the school as a 3rd-grade teacher, students improved by 83 percent in reading and 80 percent in math on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) exams. On the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment, 54 percent were proficient in reading (36 percent the prior year) and 43 percent were proficient in math (21 percent the prior year). Just as admirably,

the high-poverty school made AYP for math in the lower grades for the first time ever—recording a 16 percent increase in math proficiency in 2008–09 and an 11 percent increase in 2010.

A member of the executive leadership team, Mitchell represented her school at the National TAP Conference sponsored by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). Mitchell was invited by NIET to speak about TAP to U.S. congressional members in Washington, D.C. With her burgeoning list of accomplishments, it's no wonder Jennifer Mitchell is catching the eye of her city, state and nation.

Since first presented in 1987 to a dozen California teachers, the Milken Educator Awards have grown to become the nation's preeminent teacher recognition program, having honored more than 2,500 teachers, principals and specialists with over \$62 million in individual, unrestricted \$25,000 awards. The exponential impact of the more than 2,500 outstanding teachers has helped to reform American K-12 education. The Awards alternate each year between elementary and secondary educators.

Award Criteria:

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.
- Individuals whose contributions to education are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight.
- Early- to mid-career educators who offer strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership.
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

You can view and download the 2010 Milken Educator Awards Kick-Off YouTube Video.

Take a peek at the surprise of a lifetime that awaits 55 of America's best educators: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXh__cro4sM.

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit http://www.mff.org or call the Foundation at (310) 570-4775. You can follow the Foundation at www.twitter.com/milken, www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards and at www.youtube.com/milkenaward.

An education reformer for three decades, Lowell Milken created the Milken Educator Awards to recognize exemplary teachers and established TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement to generate more talented teachers, www.tapsystem.org.

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