



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent *“Making Education Work for All Georgians”*

Columbus Teacher Receives \$25,000 Surprise

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December 11, 2012—Lisa Bell, a teacher at Downtown Elementary Magnet Academy in Muscogee County Schools, was named Georgia's 2012 National Milken Educator of the Year.

The prestigious national recognition from the Milken Family Foundation comes with a no-strings-attached cash prize of \$25,000. Dr. Gary Stark, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, and State School Superintendent Dr. John Barge were among the leaders who participated 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.

“Today an exceptional teacher was given a well-deserved honor,” said Superintendent Barge. “I congratulate Ms. Bell and give my sincere appreciation to the Milken Foundation for using their resources for such a great cause – recognizing those who teach and inspire our students.

ABOUT THE WINNER:

Ms. Lisa Bell is one of those teachers who truly thinks outside the box. She engages her students and creates a learning environment which is based on the relationships built within the classroom. She takes time to learn the interests of students and generates content to peak their interest in learning. She is passionate about teaching, learning more herself, and sharing knowledge with students.

Ms. Bell strives to create an environment that is not only safe and engaging but also a family bond that allows students to grow by utilizing their individual talents and interests. Ms. Bell holds her students to very high expectations of performance, instills the values of education in her students and communicates her passion for learning with all stakeholders. She uses many methods of communication to keep parents informed of her expectations and student progress.

She has served as the director of Bloom Central which has been an outdoor literacy center focused on science literacy. She has worked with approximately 30-40 students twice a week each week for 45 minutes to help them develop a love and interest in nature, ecology, and life science. She has been the Hospitality Chairperson for years and is working on a school-wide garden in the courtyard. Ms. Bell was in the Top 3 for "Teacher of the Year" within the Muscogee County School System. She also served as grade level chairperson for several years in the third grade.

Ms. Bell helps all of the teachers on her grade level in moving the children forward. She has had amazing results with student academic successes in literacy as a result of her instructional strategies. She is always willing to share with others and help colleagues to get successful results with students.

ABOUT THE AWARD

Since first presented in 1987 to a dozen California teachers, the Milken Educator Awards has 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. In addition to the cash awards, new recipients have the opportunity to join the Milken Educator Network, a group of distinguished educators whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education. They also receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Los Angeles in the spring to participate in the Milken Educator Forum. The Forum brings together Award-winning educators from across the nation to address innovative strategies for advancing teacher effectiveness. The Awards alternate each year between elementary and secondary educators.

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;

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- 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; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

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