



NEWS RELEASE

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OMAHA SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER SURPRISED WITH \$25,000 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD

For full bio, photos and video, visit: <https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/lisa-moody>

Lisa Moody, a special education teacher at Jefferson Elementary, received the surprise of a lifetime when she was presented with a national [Milken Educator Award](#) this morning at a schoolwide assembly of cheering students, colleagues, local and state dignitaries, and the media. The national honor from [Milken Family Foundation](#), is bestowed upon a select group of K-12 educators across the country for excellence in education, and includes an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize.

Milken Educator Awards Vice President Stephanie Bishop, joined by Nebraska Deputy Commissioner of Education Dr. Deborah Frison, presented the Award, which has been hailed as the “Oscars of Teaching.”

“Today we celebrate and honor Lisa for her excellence in instruction and dedication to her students, school and community,” said Bishop, who herself is a 2001 Virginia Milken Educator. “Her innovative teaching and deep understanding and compassion for her students make a lasting impact in their lives and the lives of her colleagues. I welcome her to our Milken Educator Network and look forward to her contributions.”

Milken Educator Awards inspire and uplift with the unique stories of educators making a profound difference for students, colleagues and communities. The specific states and schools on this year’s winners’ list remain a closely guarded secret until each Award is announced.

“Lisa exemplifies what it means to provide opportunities for all children in Nebraska,” said Frison. “Her work in special education has changed lives, both of her students and all of the students in her school. She has done an outstanding job making sure every student receives the resources and sense of community they need to be successful and receive an excellent education.”

Since the initiative's inception in 1987, more than \$140 million in funding, including more than \$73 million in individual Awards, has been devoted to the overall Milken Awards initiative, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers.

More About Lisa Moody

Innovation Through Inclusion: A fierce advocate who holds high expectations for her students, Moody focuses on student strengths and approaches every responsibility with a positive outlook. When faced with a shortage of special education teachers at Jefferson, Moody spearheaded a new hybrid, inclusive education program that mainstreamed students in her Alternate Curriculum Program into general education classrooms. Special education students learn basic social skills in the classroom while working with Moody on academic subjects and life skills. The program has now expanded to several schools throughout the district. Moody also piloted a verbal behavior program, training multiple colleagues in instructional strategies that have improved communications skills throughout the school's special education population. Moody often carries more than 25 students who see academic and social growth as they make progress toward their IEP goals.

Leadership: Acutely aware that students learn differently, Moody consistently researches, develops interventions and works with colleagues to meet student needs. She is a leader at her school and in the district where she guides professional development at Jefferson on special education topics and makes sure general education teachers have the correct accommodations for the special education students who spend time in their classrooms. At the district level, Moody serves as an intensive teacher mentor and participates on a committee that promotes equity in special education practices.

A Positive and Lasting Impact: Moody's can-do spirit encourages all her students to grow and succeed, without limitations. Working closely with parents to find ways to connect and build positive relationships, she goes out of her way to find materials students need by buying them herself or soliciting donations if they fall outside the school's budget. She engages with her students about their interests and often attends sporting events and other activities. Moody is patient with children, colleagues and families, and her impact on students is lasting with many returning to visit and share their experiences after graduation.

Education: A product of a family of educators, Moody earned a bachelor's in speech-language pathology education in 2009 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, a master's in special education in 2011 from Texas A&M University, and a master's in education with certification in early childhood and ESL in 2022 from Creighton University.

More About the Milken Educator Awards: *"The future belongs to the educated."*

Along with the financial prize, recipients join the national Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,900 top teachers, principals and specialists. The network serves as a rich resource for fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others dedicated to excellence in education.

- The honorees will also attend an all-expenses-paid Milken Educator Awards Forum in Los Angeles this April, where they will network with their new colleagues as well as veteran Milken Educators and other education leaders about how to increase their impact on K-12 education.
- In addition, they will learn about how to become involved in the Milken Friends Forever (MFF) mentoring program, in which new Milken Educators receive personalized coaching and support from a Milken Educator veteran on ways to elevate their instructional practice and take an active role in educational leadership, policy and practice.

- Veteran Milken Educators demonstrate a wide range of leadership roles at state, national and international levels.
- “We find you. You don’t find us!” Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Awards initiative has no formal nomination or application process. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then reviewed by blue ribbon panels in each state. The most exceptional candidates are recommended for the Award, with final selection made by the Milken Family Foundation.
- The \$25,000 cash Award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways. For instance, some have spent the funds on their children’s or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even adopting children.

To receive regular updates on the surprise Milken Educator Award events or to watch the Award events unfold, follow and use the #MilkenAward hashtag on [Facebook](#) (@MilkenEducatorAwards), [Twitter](#) (@Milken), [YouTube](#) (/MilkenAward), [Instagram](#) (MilkenFamilyFdn), and [TikTok](#) (@MilkenAward).

For more information, visit [MilkenEducatorAwards.org](#) or call the Milken Family Foundation at (310) 570-4772.

About the Milken Educator Awards

The first Milken Educator Awards were presented by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987. The Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. The initiative was created by the Milken Family Foundation, which celebrates more than 40 years of elevating education in America and around the world. Learn more at [MFF.org](#).

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