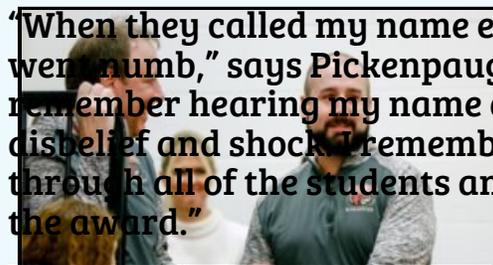




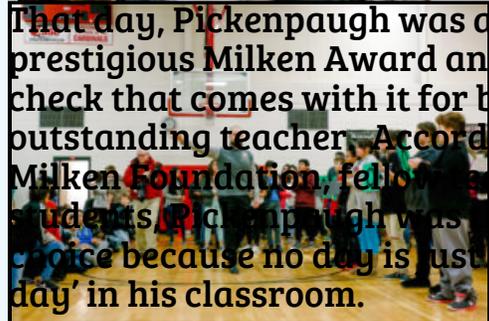
the good news series

January 11th, 2018 started like any other day for South Sioux City Middle school teacher Jon Pickenpaugh. But in an instant, everything changed.

"When they called my name everything went numb," says Pickenpaugh. "I remember hearing my name and being in disbelief and shock. I remember walking through all of the students and receiving the award."



That day, Pickenpaugh was awarded the prestigious Milken Award and the \$25,000 check that comes with it for being an outstanding teacher. According to the Milken Foundation, fellow teachers, and students, Pickenpaugh was the perfect choice because no day is just 'any other day' in his classroom.



"He's one of my more interactive teachers. He talks to us a lot and jokes around with us. He's fun. He's not boring," says eighth grader Kyla Ott.



But she agrees, "he makes learning fun and the classroom environment fun. We are focused on what we're doing but we are having fun too."

That environment is not an accident. Even though Pickenpaugh is humble about the award, he does admit he has a certain style that resonates with students.

"I really try to relate to my students. I think of the teachers I had when I was younger and what I liked and didn't like



and then I try to incorporate the likes into my classroom. As an educator you need to have a relationship with your students first and foremost. If you don't have that, and go in as an authoritarian figure, they will look at you and not respect you that much. But if they do respect you through the relationship, they will work harder."

Pickenpaugh's simple strategy works and makes a big difference according to his students.

"He makes class fun. It goes by way quicker and we listen more in his class," says Aubree Banbarcum.

"People look forward to going to his classroom. I hear seventh graders say they want Pickenpaugh," says Marcela Gonzalez.



"My classroom is a warm and inviting place where every student comes in and feels safe. We

have fun and are collaborative," says Pickenpaugh. "I want my students to have the best experience they've ever had in school. We have respect and the kids know I'm