



## NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email ([david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov))

APRIL 28, 2022

# LYONS-DECATUR ENGLISH TEACHER SURPRISED WITH \$25,000 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD

For full bio, photos and video, visit:

<https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/katie-mace>

Lyons-Decatur Northeast High School English teacher Katie Mace received the surprise of a lifetime today during a schoolwide assembly—a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award presented by the Milken Family Foundation. The event is part of a nationwide tour honoring outstanding educators who display exceptional instructional talent, an inspiring presence, and the potential for strong, long-range leadership in the profession for decades to come.

Mace is the second recipient in Nebraska for the 2021-2022 season and the first ever from Lyons-Decatur Northeast Schools. She joins Michelle Fouts of Kearney's Bryant Elementary, who was awarded at a surprise assembly yesterday.

"The Milken Educator Awards honor the best in the country and Katie Mace is proof that a big impact can be made no matter the size of a school or district," said Stephanie Bishop, vice president of the Milken Educator Awards and a 2001 Milken Educator from Virginia. "Her ability to create engaging assignments, seamlessly adapt to changing needs, and her outstanding leadership in and out of the classroom are some of the characteristics that make her a Milken Educator. We are pleased to celebrate Katie today and welcome her into the national network of Milken Educators."

Hailed as the "Oscars of Teaching," the Milken Educator Awards celebrate, elevate and activate the American teaching profession and inspire young, capable people to join it. The Milken Educator Award is not a lifetime achievement honor. Recipients are heralded while early to mid-career for what they have achieved — and for the promise of what they will accomplish given the resources and opportunities inherent in the Award.

"The role of a teacher often means being something different for different students," says Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matthew Blomstedt. "Katie Mace is a perfect example of Nebraska teachers going the extra mile to wear many hats. From teaching English, to coaching One Act, and even filling the role of counselor, Mace is always there for her students in whatever way they need. We are all grateful for her work in preparing students for life-long success after high school."

Oprah, a longtime education advocate, shared her congratulations to this year's recipients in [a video message](#) thanking "the most incredible educators around the country" and acknowledging her deep appreciation for the "tireless work" they do. U.S. Secretary of Education [Dr. Miguel Cardona said](#) Milken Educators "personify excellence in education" and "inspire leadership and motivate students to excel."

## More About Katie Mace

**Innovation:** Mace's exceptional instructional practices keep her students excited and engaged as they improve their reading and language arts skills. She implements creative and fun assignments for her classes such as a medieval feast given by students for staff and peers during their unit on medieval literature and culture, "Shark Tank"-style pitches for fictional business ideas and recitation of the Gettysburg Address for speech students. During the pandemic, Mace was determined for her students to continue to engage and find learning success despite the difficult circumstances, so she created a virtual project involving making t-shirts at home out of found objects and decorating them with catchy slogans related to "The Hobbit" for an online "trashion" show.

**Leadership:** Mace leads the Lyons-Decatur Northeast school improvement team, which drives professional development and helps teachers analyze data to enhance their instruction, as well as serves on the school's MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) team. Her classroom is frequently used as a point of observation during learning walks for LDNE staff as a model for classroom management and instructional strategies. Mace has led professional development on maintaining student engagement and increasing reading achievement, and also teaches dual enrollment English classes with Nebraska Wesleyan for students from LDNE and nearby districts. Her leadership extends beyond the classroom as she coaches the One Act drama team, leads fundraising efforts and organizes all senior events leading up to and including the commencement ceremony. She is well-known with colleagues, students' families and community members for her excellence in preparing seniors during high school, as well as the next steps in their lives. Many former students attribute their college and career successes to her due to her expert advice and guidance.

**Education:** Mace earned a bachelor's in secondary English in 2003 from the University of Nebraska, a master's in English in 2011 from University of Wayne State and a master's in counseling in 2014 from Nebraska Wesleyan.

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

Along with the \$25,000 financial prize, recipients join the national Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,800 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.

- In June, the honorees will attend an all-expenses-paid Milken Educator Awards Forum in Los Angeles, 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 (MFFs) mentoring program, in which freshman 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.
- Over the years, more than \$140 million in funding, including \$70 million for the individual cash awards, has been devoted to the overall Milken Awards initiative, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers.
- Veteran Milken Educators frequently go on to serve in 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 get 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](https://www.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 40 years of elevating education in America and around the world. Learn more at [MFF.org](http://MFF.org)*

####

*David Jespersen  
Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education  
402-471-4537  
david.jespersen@nebraska.gov  
@NDE\_News*