The Surprise of a Lifetime
Mobile County Schools Educator Receives Milken Educator Award and $25,000

Montgomery, Ala. — The Milken Family Foundation (MFF) and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) are pleased to honor Dr. Melody Tucker as the 2015-16 Alabama Milken Educator! Dr. Tucker is an educator at Citronelle High School in Mobile County Public Schools. She teaches science in Grades 9-12 with high enthusiasm and creative instruction. Dr. Melody Tucker is indispensable to Citronelle High School, teaching everything from regular, Honors, and AP Biology, to Honors Anatomy and Physiology to her eager classes.

The prestigious honor, which was launched by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987, has been described as “the Oscars of teaching” by Teacher magazine. Since 1987, the Milken Family Foundation has awarded over $66 million in individual awards to more than 2,600 recipients. Alabama has seen 33 Milken Educator Award winners since 1998.

"Melody Tucker is a STEM leader who instills in her students an appreciation for the sciences and inspires them to excel long after they have left her class," said Dr. Jane Foley, senior vice president of the Milken Educator Awards. "Colleagues from the school, district and beyond have also drawn on her expertise, broadening Melody's impact. We are pleased to honor her work with a Milken Educator Award and look forward to following her contributions to education for years to come."

Creating a college atmosphere in the classroom, Tucker uses innovative, project-based instructional techniques to engage her students. One of her memorable tasks involved asking them to create a 3-D replica of a cell, which they presented to their peers, and were then made to defend. Another of her assignments that thrilled them was a full immersion of an interactive biology notebook that she had created.

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Mobile County School System Educator Receives Milken Educator Award and $25,000 Cash

Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education, said, “This tremendous honor is greatly deserved by Dr. Tucker. Her devotion to students matched with her innovative teaching methods creates a great combination ensuring success from her students. We are grateful to have her as an Alabama educator.”

Tucker’s use of real-world examples, technology and labs has led her students to maintain a 93% passing rate at this high-poverty school. Tucker’s classroom presence is commanding, and she paces herself to work with all, including honors, regular and special needs students.

To complement her classroom practices, she works with online programs such as Moodle, GradPoint and ACCESS to help students stay on track with assignments.

Tucker received her Bachelor of Science in biology with a teaching certification and minor in music from the University of Mobile in 2005. She performed her graduate work in instructional design at the University of South Alabama, where she earned a Master of Education in 2008 and a Doctor of Philosophy in 2013.

“It is exciting to have the work of an outstanding science teacher recognized,” said Mobile County Public Schools Superintendent Martha Peek. “Dr. Melody Tucker is a leading teacher who inspires and motivates students to be engaged learners in the classes she teaches. She is most deserving of this national award.”

New recipients are invited to join the Milken Educator Network, a group of distinguished educators coast to coast whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards, and others shaping the future of education.

Recipients are selected in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. Alternating yearly between elementary and secondary educators, the Milken Awards are sourced through each participating State Department of Education, which appoints an independent blue ribbon committee to confidentially review candidates for recommendation to MFF.

Tucker is Mobile County Public Schools’ sixth teacher to be named a Milken Educator. The others are: Jennifer Olewnik of Grand Bay Middle (2013); Stephanie LeGrone, the district’s science supervisor who was formerly a teacher at Mary G. Montgomery (2009); Lynn McCain, formerly of J.E. Turner Elementary and Semmes Middle (2006); Mike Fletcher of Davidson High (2003); and Scott Nelson of Baker High (1998).

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org or call MFF at (310) 570-4772.

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