



For Immediate Release:

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Contact: Kelly Donnelly 860.713.6525

Bloomfield school principal surprised with \$25,000 honor

Metacomet Elementary School's Desi Nesmith wins prestigious Milken Educator Award

(BLOOMFIELD, CT)—In a surprise presentation today at a school assembly, Metacomet Elementary School Principal Desi D. Nesmith was presented with a 2014 Milken Educator Award and the \$25,000 prize that comes with it.

Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor, Bloomfield Superintendent James Thompson Jr., Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley, and other officials were on hand to witness the emotional presentation, along with students, faculty, and community members.

"Principal Nesmith has a strong track record of leading his school team in improving student performance and closing the achievement gap," Commissioner Pryor said. "We are fortunate that Mr. Nesmith continues to make such a contribution to our education system in Bloomfield and in Connecticut. Thanks to his leadership, Metacomet is delivering better outcomes for students and in so doing has become a model for others to emulate. We congratulate Principal Nesmith, Metacomet Elementary School, and Bloomfield Public Schools on their well-deserved recognition."

"Desi Nesmith has the markings of a true leader. He creates a culture of high expectations and works hand-in-hand with his faculty to ensure a quality educational experience for every student," said Dr. Jane Foley, senior vice president of the Milken Educator Awards and a 1994 Milken Educator Award recipient from Indiana. "His perseverance, care and compassion have made a lasting impact on students' lives. We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Nesmith into the Milken Educator Network and look forward to what the future holds."

Since Nesmith became principal at Metacomet in 2011, the school has eliminated a third-grade achievement gap in reading by 19 percent, with reading scores currently exceeding the state average by 8.1 percent.

"The town of Bloomfield is extremely honored that the Milken Foundation has recognized Principal Nesmith for his exceptional contribution to education excellence," said Superintendent James Thompson. "His leadership at Metacomet contributed to an overall surge in academic performance throughout our K-12 system over the past three years. Principal Nesmith's receipt of this prestigious award speaks volumes about his engagement with staff, students and parents."

Previously, Nesmith presided over the turnaround of SAND Elementary School in Hartford, which went from being the sixth-lowest performing school in Connecticut to being recognized in 2010 as one of the top-10 improved schools.

Nesmith's impact extends well beyond the campus. His success in closing the achievement gap serves as a model for other schools throughout the country. He is vice president of the Neag School of Education Alumni Association at the University of Connecticut and has spoken to members of Congress about services for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As a former student of Metacomet who lived across the street as a child, Nesmith has a special history with the school and calls it his home. He greets the school's third- and fourth-grade students with handshakes, high-fives, and words of encouragement, and is the type of leader who works in the trenches with faculty ensuring that every child's needs are met.

The Milken Educator Awards have been given annually since 1987 to exceptional educators who are furthering excellence in the nation's schools. Principals, teachers, and specialists are considered without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's department of education. Winners can use the \$25,000 in any way they choose. For more information, visit www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org.

Since Connecticut joined the program in 1988, the Milken Family Foundation has honored 92 educators from the state.

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CONTACT: Kelly Donnelly
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-983-1550
Email: Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov