



NJDOE News

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Wall Principal, Camden Music Teacher Honored with \$25,000 Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards

Even though James Gleason is the only administrator in a school of 300 students, he can often be seen walking the halls talking to them and eating lunch alongside them.

Jamal Dickerson is a product of Camden, and he spends every day teaching children that they, too, have a chance to succeed.

The two men, true leaders in their school communities, were honored by the Milken Family Foundation on Thursday with National Educator Awards. They each received \$25,000 checks and will join the Milken Family Foundation as exemplary educators and school leaders.

"Each year, we identify some of the top educators in the state and honor them with National Educator Awards," said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "James Gleason and Jamal Dickerson continue this tradition. Both are outstanding leaders in their school communities, and both come to school every day with one goal in mind: how can I make a student's life better?"

Called the "Oscars of Teaching" by Teacher Magazine, the Milken National Educator Awards were created by Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-Founder Lowell Milken to celebrate and elevate the highest caliber of professionals in the nation's schools.

"My own teachers prepared me well to take advantage of life's opportunities," said Lowell Milken, chairman and CEO of the foundation. "Ask any successful person and they'll tell you that they had outstanding teachers who helped them succeed. That's why we honor them with National Educator Awards each year, nationwide. We need to celebrate the good works of our best teachers."

This is the sixth year that New Jersey has taken part in the awards program.

Gleason, who was recognized this morning, has been the only principal in Communication High School's seven-year existence. A state Teacher of the Year in 1993, Gleason is credited with setting the tone, both in curriculum and school atmosphere, that kept the school up and running through its early years as part of the Monmouth County Vocational School District.

"Jim serves as an instructional leader, disciplinarian, head teacher, parent liaison and in myriad other duties," said Assistant Superintendent Timothy McCorkel. "He is an outstanding role model for students, staff and parents and he has played a central role in developing this high performing school."

"I can say without hesitation that Jim Gleason is tireless in his dedication to the success of his staff, students, and school," said Maryanne Rodriguez, a Communications High School teacher.

Gleason has a bachelor's degree from the former Trenton State College (now The College of New Jersey) in technology education and a master's degree in educational administration from Kean College. He began teaching in 1990.

Dickerson is well-known in the Camden community. A music teacher at Creative Arts High School, he holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Morgan State University. He is heavily involved in the Unity Community Center, a group founded by his father that opens up children to the worlds of karate, dance and music.

"Students perform on a higher level because of how he motivates them to see the future in a different light," said Dr. Davida Coe-Brockington, the school principal. "Mr. Dickerson could go anywhere in the world, but he has decided to dedicate his life to teaching and inspiring his students. He truly is someone who is giving back to his community."

"Many of his students want to walk in his shoes - or get a pair just like them," said parent Anthony Benson Sr. "I say to my children, 'Success is a journey, not a destination.' 'Mr. D' exemplifies this in every aspect of his life. If my son did not want to grow up like me and wanted to be anything like Mr. D, then I have accomplished something."

Since 1987, more than \$58 million has been awarded to more than 2,300 educators. Since 2002, 16 New Jersey educators have been honored to the tune of \$400,000.

Candidates for the Milken Educator Awards are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards please contact the Milken Family Foundation at (310) 570-4775 or visit www.mff.org.

For additional information about today's awards, please contact Jon Zlock of the Department of Education's Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.