



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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RUSSELLVILLE – Principal Sheri Shirley was greeted with cheers when she was honored as a 2008 Milken Family Foundation National Educator during a surprise assembly at Oakland Heights Elementary School this morning. As part of the award, Parker received an unrestricted financial prize of \$25,000.

Arkansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Ken James and Gov. Mike Beebe presented the award to Shirley along with Dr. Tom Boyson representing the Milken Family Foundation.

"The Milken National Educator Award is one of the finest recognitions available to teachers and is not one easily earned," Dr. James said. "The individuals who win this award inspire not only their students to achieve higher levels of success, but also their fellow educators."

Shirley has led Oakland Heights students to unprecedented levels of achievement, despite the challenges many of them face. Her success at the school was highlighted in "It's Being Done: Academic Success in Unexpected Schools" by Karin Chenoweth. "She not only impacts the lives of her students and staff but also reaches out into the community. She works with students' families to make sure they have the resources they need...and goes the extra mile to cross language barriers," Russellville superintendent Randall Williams wrote when nominating Shirley for the award.

Shirley is the second Arkansan to win the award this year. Last week, Elizabeth Parker, a second-grade teacher at Cavanaugh Elementary School in Fort Smith, was honored in a similar ceremony.

Up to 80 educators across the country are being recognized for their outstanding work with the awards at surprise ceremonies this fall. In addition to the cash prizes, all Milken National Educators will be recognized at a national gala and awards ceremony in the spring. National Educator Award winners also become members of the Milken Educator Network, a coalition of educators who provide expert resources and serve as partners to network members and policymakers as they help cultivate and expand innovative programs in their classrooms, schools and districts.

Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-founder Lowell Milken created these awards in 1985 to recognize, celebrate and attract the highest caliber school professionals. Since the program's inception, more than \$56 million in cash prizes have been awarded to 2,300-plus educators. In Arkansas, the Foundation has awarded \$1.6 million to 64 recipients since the program began.

***The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.***