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Contact: Laura Blank, (646) 245-2496, laura@keylightcommunications.com

Baltimore County Public Schools Teacher Melissa Salkeld Earns \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

Prettyboy Elementary School kindergarten teacher equips young learners for academic and personal growth

Oprah Winfrey congratulates Milken Educators in heartwarming video message as ‘light in this world’

U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona says Milken Educators “personify excellence in education”

For full bio, photos and video, visit

<https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/melissa-salkeld>

Freeland, MD (May 17, 2022) — In a surprise assembly today, Melissa Salkeld, a kindergarten teacher at Prettyboy Elementary School, received a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award for her unique combination of high expectations and heartfelt dedication that encourages social, emotional and academic growth in her young learners. Every year, Salkeld’s kindergarteners show marked improvement over their peers, ready and equipped to thrive in school.

Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley, Maryland Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury and Superintendent of Schools for Baltimore County Public Schools Dr. Darryl Williams presented Salkeld with the honor before cheering students, colleagues, state and local officials and the media. Salkeld will join the national Milken Educator Network, a cadre of more than 2,800 educators and leaders across the U.S. dedicated to furthering quality K-12 education.

“Kindergarten teachers like Melissa Salkeld have the important responsibility of providing fertile ground for all students to grow, both academically and as individuals,” said Dr. Foley, who is herself a 1994 Milken Educator from Indiana. “In Melissa’s classroom, students develop crucial skills of self-motivation, independence, collaboration, and critical thinking. Melissa’s talents extend beyond the classroom through her membership on Prettyboy’s instructional leadership team, where she advocates for equitable educational opportunities for all. We welcome Melissa

Salkeld into the Milken Educator Award family today and look forward to the contributions she will bring on a national scale. Congratulations, Melissa!”

Salkeld is the first educator from Prettyboy Elementary School and among some 60 educators coast-to-coast who will receive the Award during the 2021-22 school year. She is the only Milken Educator Award recipient from Maryland this season.

“Today, we are among greatness. As a Milken Educator Award winner, Melissa Salkeld sets the standard for excellence in education, not only in Maryland but throughout the country,” said Maryland State Superintendent Choudhury. “I share my congratulations and thanks to Ms. Salkeld, Prettyboy Elementary School and Baltimore County Schools for their commitment to outstanding teaching and learning. We know that teachers profoundly impact the positive trajectory of student lives, which reverberates through our communities, the fabric of our nation and generations yet to come. Our mission to realize a bright future for every child is only possible through the efforts of educators like Ms. Salkeld whose exceptional skill, dedication and success prioritizes both the academic acceleration and social-emotional wellbeing of her young students.”

“Melissa Salkeld is a tremendous example of the impact great teachers have on the lives of their students,” said Baltimore County Public Schools Superintendent Williams. “Her innovative teaching methods, leadership in the school community and unwavering belief in her students have consistently resulted in positive outcomes for students. Congratulations to Melissa, her students, and the entire Prettyboy Elementary School community for this well-deserved recognition.”

Hailed as the “Oscars of Teaching,” Milken Educator Awards inspire and uplift with the unique stories of educators making a profound difference for students, colleagues and communities. The Awards are not designated for lifetime achievement. 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.

Oprah, a longtime education advocate, shared her congratulations to this year’s winners [in a video message shared earlier this year](#) 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 Melissa Salkeld:

Classroom Creativity for Young Learners: Salkeld holds high expectations for the youngest learners at Prettyboy Elementary School. She connects concepts to real life, helping students practice specific strategies, incorporate precise vocabulary, and demonstrate their learning. Salkeld often divides the class into small groups, allowing students to work collaboratively as she moves from table to table, differentiating to meet each child’s strengths and needs. Students use manipulatives, checklists of success criteria, and technology like audiobooks, First in Math and Wixie to move toward mastery of reading, numeracy and other age-appropriate

skills. Salkeld's pupils show consistent growth each year and leave her class prepared to succeed in higher grades.

Focus on Social and Emotional Learning: Salkeld brings innovative practices to her classroom, with a strong focus on social and emotional learning (SEL). She has studied Conscious Discipline, a trauma-informed, evidence-based SEL methodology, and threads its strategies throughout her practice. With respect, caring and genuine love, Salkeld strengthens her students' social emotional skills, coaches other teachers on managing behavioral issues, and shares academic and emotional support techniques with parents so they can build children's strengths at home. A strong advocate for children, especially those with special needs, Salkeld stresses equity and believes all students should have equal opportunities to learn and succeed in her class.

Leader in Education Best Practices: As a member of Prettyboy's school progress planning team, Salkeld helped design professional development for staff on responsive instruction, including developing data stories, exploring learner variability, and creating equitable learning environments. She has introduced colleagues to SEL strategies that support students' self-regulation and executive functioning, including mindful breathing, classroom commitments, and student jobs. Salkeld welcomes colleagues for learning walks and has led professional development for the district on executive functioning. Visitors from the district, University of Delaware and Johns Hopkins University have observed Salkeld's implementation of academic and SEL best practices. Through a partnership with Universal Design for Learning Implementation and Research Network, educators from around the U.S., Australia and Canada have visited Salkeld's classroom.

Education: Salkeld earned a bachelor's in early childhood education from Villa Julie College in 2006 and a master's in curriculum, instruction and assessment in 2013 from Walden University.

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

Along with the financial prize, Milken Educator Award 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 or call the Milken Family Foundation at (310) 570-4772.

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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.