

Item 3:

Milken Educator Award Recipient Recognition: Amber Simpson, Somerset ISD

Board Recognition

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an opportunity to recognize the recipient of the 2016 Milken Educator Award for the State of Texas. Amber Simpson, a Master Teacher at Barrera Veterans Elementary in the Somerset Independent School District, received the prestigious Milken Educator Award. Simpson is the sole recipient of the award in Texas for the 2016-17 academic year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: For 30 years, the Milken Educator Awards, an initiative of the Milken Family Foundation, have rewarded and inspired excellence in the world of education by honoring top educators around the country with \$25,000 unrestricted awards. Demands on educators and our expectations for their skills and knowledge have increased over time, and the public spotlight on individual educators and the teaching profession is intense and widespread. In turn, earning the Milken Award has become more competitive and the selection review at the Milken Foundation increasingly rigorous. To date, more than 2,700 awards have been given out, totaling \$68 million. The one-time award is just the beginning. Milken Educators are given access to powerful networking and development tools throughout their careers in education.

On February 7, 2017, Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Education Commissioner Mike Morath surprised Amber Simpson in a packed school assembly at Barrera Veterans Elementary. Before cheering students, respected colleagues, distinguished officials, and media, Amber Simpson became Somerset Independent School District's first recipient of the Milken Educator Award.

Amber Simpson doesn't teach just one class at Barrera Veterans Elementary School; she helps drive instruction for the entire campus. As a master teacher, she is a vital part of the school's leadership team, sharing duties with the administrators and fellow master and mentor teachers. She works with teachers from kindergarten through fourth grade. She helps facilitate weekly professional development meetings, during which she coaches faculty on systematically tracking their students' progress and developing action plans to reinforce strengths and address areas of improvement. This work is complemented by observing educators in the classroom, modeling and testing new instructional techniques, introducing curriculum, and assessing students' learning along the way.

Through the staff's effort with their instructional model, students are achieving more than a year's worth of value-added growth as compared to similar schools throughout the state. Simpson, who served as a team lead and mentor teacher before becoming a master teacher, relishes her role as a resource for her colleagues. In addition to the meaningful guidance that she provides, she makes presentations each year at the orientation for new teachers at the district level. Beyond the school, Simpson serves on several district curriculum committees and mentors new master teachers in the district.

Well-known in the community and respected by parents, Simpson provides one-on-one tutoring for students with whom she develops long-term relationships. She motivates students to excel in school, encourages them to plan for college, and attends their graduation ceremonies. Simpson's former students return often to Barrera to share their successes with her.

Simpson earned a Bachelor of Science in interdisciplinary studies in 1999 from Texas State University and a Master's in educational leadership in 2003 from Concordia University.

Texas Education Agency staff joins the SBEC in recognizing Amber Simpson, the Texas 2016 Milken Award Recipient.

Staff Member Responsible: Viviana Lopez
Educator Support