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**Embracing a Growth Mindset Earns Pierre Math Teacher Nichole Bowman a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award**

*Governor Kristi Noem and Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson join Milken Family Foundation to honor Bowman for role in teacher and student excellence at T.F. Riggs High School*

*Oprah Winfrey congratulates Milken Educators in heartwarming video message as 'light in this world'*

For full bio, photos and video, visit

<https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/nichole-bowman>

**Santa Monica, Calif.**, (March 22, 2022) — South Dakota high school teacher Nichole Bowman knows that no two students are alike. In her math classes at T.F. Riggs High School, she invests significant time and energy in differentiation, using personalized and small-group instruction to allow students of all abilities move through the curriculum at their own pace. Today at a surprise ceremony, she was recognized for her dedication to Riggs High teachers and students with a national Milken Educator Award in front of appreciative colleagues, students, education officials and media.

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem and Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson joined Milken Educator Awards Senior Program Director Greg Gallagher to present Bowman with the prestigious recognition, which includes an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize. In addition to today's festivities, Bowman will join a national network of more than 2,800 Milken Educators and K-12 education leaders across the U.S.

"Nichole Bowman is a changemaker in education," said Gallagher. "She not only takes a purposeful interest in meeting students where they are, but also extends her impact beyond the walls of Riggs High School. By mentoring teachers, propagating best practices and developing strategies for the needs of an evolving student population, everyone benefits."

Bowman is among more than 60 educators nationwide who will receive the Award during the 2021-22 school year. She is the second recipient from T.F. Riggs High School since the Milken Educator Awards launched in 1987.

"Nichole works hard to meet each student exactly where they are so they can learn. She's been very successful as a math teacher," said Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson. "She also regularly seeks out leadership opportunities, including helping to lead implementation of our state's math standards. She helps grow the profession by mentoring new teachers, and she is always there for students — whether serving as an advisor or attending students' activities to cheer them on."

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 recipients [in a video message](#) thanking “the most incredible educators around the country” and acknowledging her deep appreciation for the “tireless work” they do.

### **More About Nichole Bowman**

**Community Connections:** Bowman recently moved from Georgia Morse Middle School in the same district. She currently teaches many of the same students she had previously for eighth grade math.

**Mastering New Learning:** During the pandemic, Bowman welcomed algebra students to her online platform, answering questions via email and Zoom. Bowman’s strategies have delivered remarkable results: At her previous school, nearly half scored at an advanced level on the statewide assessment in math. Bowman celebrates learning from mistakes and navigating learning curves to push every student to perform at higher levels.

**District Involvement:** Bowman has worked with the South Dakota Department of Education on reviewing and revising state content standards in math. She led regional best practices workshops for math educators. Bowman also represented her district in work with the department to explore policies to address the needs of the district’s increasingly diverse population. At Morse, Bowman led the eighth grade team, advised student council, helped the building leadership team develop strategies to deal with increased enrollment, mentored new teachers, and supported struggling students in a designated “Lifeguard” role.

**Student Support:** Bowman’s support for students goes beyond the classroom. She knows how important it is for students to see their teachers outside of school and makes a point of showing up at concerts, athletic events, or whatever students are involved in. Bowman encourages colleagues to consider every decision through one key lens—whether it will benefit students.

**Education:** Bowman earned a bachelor’s in mathematics in 2007 from Northern State 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.

- The honorees will also attend an all-expenses-paid Milken Educator Awards Forum, 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](#).*