

Item 3:

Recognition: Milken Educator Award Recipient Laura Servin, Whittier MS, San Antonio ISD

Board Recognition

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an opportunity to recognize the recipient of the 2015 Milken Educator Award for the state of Texas. Laura Servin, a math teacher at Whittier Middle School in the San Antonio Independent School District received the prestigious Milken Educator Award, which comes with an unrestricted \$25,000 financial prize. Servin is the sole recipient of the Milken Educator Award in Texas for the 2015-16 academic year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Milken Educator Awards have been instrumental in recognizing exceptional K-12 teachers, principals, and specialists since 1987. It is the largest teacher recognition program with nearly 2,700 talented educators proudly bearing the prestigious designation of “Milken Educator.” Demands on educators and 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.

On February 18, 2016, Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Commissioner of Education Mike Morath surprised Laura Servin in a packed school assembly at Whittier Middle School. Before cheering students, respected colleagues, distinguished officials, and the media, Laura Servin became San Antonio Independent School District’s first recipient of the Milken Educator Award.

Passionate about teaching and doing whatever it takes to help students succeed, eighth-grade math teacher Laura Servin is known as a go-to expert for motivating students at Whittier Middle School, a health and science internal charter middle school in the San Antonio Independent School District. This commitment is put into practice in Servin’s classroom where she creates a safe and nurturing learning environment for her students. Curriculum content jumps off the page as students engage in project-based learning. Servin sets high expectations and actively involves students in their own progress and outcomes. She pays acute attention to individual needs and offers tutoring before and after school as well as during lunch and on weekends to ensure that her students stay on task.

Catering to the school’s 98% Hispanic population, 94% of whom are on free and reduced lunch, Servin communicates to students and their parents in Spanish as well as English, and makes building strong relationships paramount to success. These efforts have resulted in Servin’s algebra students achieving 100% mastery on the state algebra test and students in her other math classes obtaining high pass rates.

Beyond the classroom, Servin’s involvement on the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) site team has helped place students on a clear path to college and career, and earned Whittier Middle recognition as an AVID National Demonstration School. She serves on

the school leadership team, is a teacher mentor, helps lead the pep squad, and works as the school's sponsor on the National Junior Honors Society (NJHS). One NJHS project involved securing a grant for Amazon Kindle e-readers for students to read to elementary students and others throughout the community. Servin has also coached seventh and eighth grade girls' volleyball and has taught summer school to improve passing rates on the state test.

At the district and community levels, Servin has participated in professional development, sharing her practices and bringing valuable lessons back to her school. Her compassion for others is reflected in her lead role coordinating the Race for Cancer activities at school and in the community, honoring a colleague who has ovarian cancer.

Servin holds her bachelor's degree and Texas teaching certification from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, both received in 2006.

TEA staff joins the SBEC in recognizing Laura Servin, the Texas 2015 Milken Educator Award recipient.

Staff Member Responsible: Viviana Lopez
Educator Leadership and Quality