



We are Proud of our Teachers

There are many influences on student success – parents, community members, school leaders and policymakers – but it would be impossible for Missouri to reach the Top 10 in student achievement if we didn't have effective teachers leading our children's classrooms. I want to highlight a few times this month when the impact of effective teachers took the spotlight.

An outstanding example of an effective teacher has just received a Milken Educator Award, a prestigious national award that recognizes excellence in instruction. Congratulations to Deborah Siebern-Dennis of St. Joseph School District!

Deborah, a 7th and 8th grade honors science teacher at Bode Middle School in St. Joseph, was honored for mentoring fellow teachers, which leads to improved instruction in her classroom and school, her nominators said.

“Deborah is a lifelong learner,” her nominator stated. “She has a passion for learning and teaching middle school.”

We are proud and excited that the Milken Educator Award recognizes excellent educators in Missouri. Deborah is the 46th Missouri teacher to win the award since the state began participating 20 years ago. She sets a standard that we believe every teacher in Missouri can reach.

The impact of effective teachers was also discussed at a gathering this month of lead teachers from across Missouri. The main takeaway from the teacher advisory committee meeting was the need to empower teachers to serve as leaders in improving student learning. That same theme and other similar messages were highlighted at the first National Summit on Teacher Leadership in Washington, D.C., this month. I attended with a team of Missouri educators.

Missouri has many great teachers who make a difference in our children's lives every day. We must work together to provide the support and resources necessary to ensure we have an effective teacher in every classroom. Our students deserve no less.

Margie Vandeven



Overwhelmed by the continued applause from students, staff and guests, Milken Award recipient Deborah Siebern-Dennis tries to catch her breath as Missouri Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Margie Vandeven looks on proudly. Photo © 2016 Milken Family Foundation