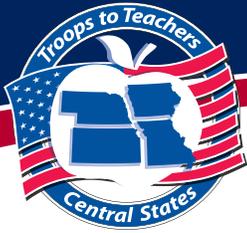


TROOPS TO TEACHERS



✦ JEFFERSON CITY OFFICE

877.530.2765

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314.729.2444

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816.241.1705

Soldier On Watch - Christmas Poem

I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.

*My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
my daughter beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.*

*My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep
in perfect contentment, or so it would seem.
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.*

*The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eye when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.*

*My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
and I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
Alone figure stood, his face weary and tight.*

*A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old
perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.*

*"What are you doing?" I asked without fear
"Come in here this moment, it's freezing out there!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your arm,
you should be at home, this cold could do harm!"*

*For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts,
to the window that danced with a warm fire's light
then he sighed and he said "Its really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night"*

*"Its my duty to stand at the front of the line,
that separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.*

*My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,"
then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always
remembers."*

*My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam
and now it is my turn and so, here I am.*

*I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
but my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
the red white and blue... the American flag.*

*"I can live through the cold and the being alone,
away from my family, my house and my home,
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat,*

*I can carry the weight of killing another
or lay down my life with my sisters and brothers
who stand at the front against any and all,
to insure for all time that this flag will not fall."*

*"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."*

*"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."*

*Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget
to fight for our rights back at home while we're gone.
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.*

*For when we come home, either standing or dead,
to know you remember we fought and we bled
is payment enough, and with that we will trust.
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us.*

- Author Unknown





TTT SUCCESS STORY: JOHN F. GALLEN

Grade/Subject: Special Education
School: Copperas Cove High School
School District: Copperas Cove

As I reflect on my 20th year of teaching and the numerous Special Education students I have taught over the years, I can only hope and pray that I have made a difference or impact in their lives. My philosophy has been that these students should be able to go out into society and make their own contribution, by being productive voting citizens in the United States of America.

A number of my students have entered the military and are making great contributions to this nation. When I retired from the Army in 1993, I never dreamed that I would spend twenty more years in another profession.

I applied and got accepted into an alternative certification program which at the time was fairly new to Central Texas. In my ESC Region 12 class were many veterans and the bond that was there based on common experiences held me in good stead. A lot of us applied for Troops to Teachers at that time and it made a significant difference in my career experience in education.

First, my school district benefited from me being a veteran and second I benefited by applying and receiving a \$10000 stipend offered by Troops to Teachers. As a veteran I bring my military experience to the classroom and can relate to the military kids of which were the majority of the population that I taught in Copperas Cove High School, since we are a community right next door to Fort Hood, Texas.

Along the way I received a few awards, but the real reward was seeing my students excel and eventually graduate from Copperas Cove High School. It is always a joy to hear from former students who let you know how they are doing and thanking you for making a difference in their lives.

When I retire from teaching after this school year I am going to miss the students, however; I am going also miss my colleagues I have had the honor and pleasure to work alongside over the past 20 years, many of which are also veterans. I am looking to continue to "Pay it Forward" and become an educational consultant and continue to serve my community of Copperas Cove for years to come. I have been "Proud to Serve Again" and hold my head high as a veteran and soon to be retired teacher. Troops to Teachers has given me that opportunity over the past 20 years.

STATE TEACHER JOB VACANCY SITES

Looking for a new job? These are some links that may prove useful for finding certified and substitute teaching jobs. For a more complete listing go to our website:

WWW.TROOPSTOTEACHERS.MO.GOV

MO: <http://www.moteachingjobs.com/>

IA: <http://www.iowaeducationjobs.com/>

NE: <http://www.nebraskaeducationjobs.com/>

KS: <http://www.kansasteachingjobs.com/>

MISSOURI/IOWA/ NEBRASKA/KANSAS

Chad Schatz, Director

Ron Marsch, Supervisor

**Missouri Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education**

Veterans Education and Training Section

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<http://www.education.ne.gov/tcrt>

KANSAS

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TROOPS TO TEACHERS MENTORS

We are pleased to have a list of mentors on our web site. These people have successfully been through the process from start to finish. They are offering their thoughts, insights, and encouragement to others pursuing their goals of becoming teachers.

WANT TO BECOME A MENTOR?

The advice and guidance you will provide is invaluable to fellow veterans interested in starting careers as K-12 public school teachers.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO BE A MENTOR?

Visit: DESE.TroopsToTeachers@DESE.mo.gov or

click here to join us: <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/TTT-MENTOR%20CONNECTION-%202006-14.pdf>

THE NATIONAL TROOPS TO TEACHERS WEBSITE IS LOCATED AT WWW.PROUDTOSERVEAGAIN.COM

VETERAN'S EDUCATION & TRAINING SECTION

MISSOURI STATE APPROVING AGENCY



SUCCESS STORY: RECEIVING VA OJT BENEFITS!

After I retired from the Air Force I worked as a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist for the State of Missouri. After six months of employment it was brought to my attention by a co-worker (our job center's Local Veteran Employer Representative (LVER)) that I could be receiving VA GI BillTM compensation benefits for on-the-job training (OJT) and that those benefits could be backdated to the beginning of my employment at the job center. After I heard about this I immediately contacted the VA to ensure I still had Chapter 30 GI BillTM benefits since I used most of it for my Master's Degree 15 years ago. You can imagine my surprise when I heard the VA say I had enough to cover 20 months of OJT which means I could receive about \$18,000 in compensation.

To get my VA OJT benefits started my supervisor contacted Chad Schatz, Director of Veterans Education and Training at DESE. Chad came to the job center where I was employed and had us fill out all the required forms and helped my supervisor develop the training outline needed to show I was learning the tasks required for the job. Once the forms were processed by the VA, I received a compensation check for my first six months of employment (or OJT) and a monthly GI BillTM payment every month after that until I changed jobs within the State. By the end of my employment at the job center I received about \$11,000 in VA OJT compensation benefits.

I am deeply grateful for a "Vet Rep" at the job center who knows the VA programs and told me about the

options I have with my GI BillTM. It didn't occur to me that I could use the benefits I had left for anything other than college classes until he mentioned this to me. Before this happened there was a good possibility that I may have never used my GI BillTM benefits again and I would have lost what I had left after 10 years of being out of the service.

OJT is training you receive while performing a job and earning wages. Approvable VA OJT programs must be at least six months and up to two years in length. Some examples of OJT programs are Welder, Painter, Cook, Production Equipment Mechanic, Auto Mechanic, Corrections Officer, Police Officer, Parts Buyer, and in my case a DVOP for the State of Missouri. Veterans also need to keep in mind there are different compensation rules and rates for the different chapters of the GI BillTM. Veterans also must request VA OJT compensation within their first year of employment to be eligible. If you have questions it's important to ask your Veteran Representative, DVOP, or call the VA.

Any employer can find out if their company is eligible to initiate an OJT program for their newly employed veterans. Just contact your State Approving Agency to begin the approval process. Please keep in mind that not all occupations can be approved. You can also find more information about VA OJT at www.gibill.va.gov or <http://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/veterans-education/job-training-apprenticeship>.

- Eldon Fletcher, Assistant Director, Veteran Education and Training Section, DESE

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Ron Marsch: Supervisor

Eldon Fletcher: Assistant Director

Debbie Butcher: Teacher Certification Supervisor

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Room 22

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St. Louis, MO 63127

314.729.2444

Happy Holidays!

CLICK HERE FOR SCHOOL CERTIFYING OFFICIAL TRAINING & INFORMATION RESOURCES

or go to: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/school_training_resources.asp

MEET THE NEW VETERANS EDUCATION & TRAINING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: ELDON FLETCHER



Eldon Fletcher has joined the Veterans Education and Training Section of DESE as the Assistant Director in the Jefferson City office. His past experiences include serving 22 years in the Air Force as an Education and Training Manager and working at the Columbia Missouri Job Center as a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist. He has also worked as a Financial Assistance Coordinator (FAC) at Bryan University in Columbia.

"After two months of being on the job I have found that we provide an important service to not only our veterans but also to the colleges and universities we support," said Fletcher. "Ensuring colleges and universities can use the GI Bill® as a way to fund a veterans' education is a major ingredient in the ability to support all our veterans in Missouri." He also said this about the things we do in DESE, "Our office also gives our veterans the opportunity to utilize VA OJT and Apprenticeship compensation benefits... when starting a new job after the military this can be key to the veteran's future success and stability. As a retired military member this means a lot to me."

"If serving in the military taught me anything, it taught me the value of the servicemen and women inside [active duty, reserve, and guard] and outside [retirees or veterans] the military; they are skilled professionals, prepared, trained, and ready to be the best students or employees they can possibly be. As employers, educators, and trainers, we have a duty to help those who are willing to put their lives on the line to keep us safe by ensuring they get the VA benefits they are entitled to."

Fletcher is a graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida and has a master's degree in Business Administration. He and his wife Ginger have four adult children. They enjoy family time, traveling, and shopping for antiques.



NTI TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) held their National Training Institute during the last week of October. Eldon Fletcher the newly hired Assistant Director and Michele Mueller a Supervisor for the Missouri State Approving Agency (SAA) were in attendance. The training included information on the roles and responsibilities of the State Approving Agency. The presenters included SAA and VA individuals from all over the United States each sharing their own experiences.

"The three days of training were packed with information and learning activities which only skimmed the surface of what is involved in this position. I came away from the training with an appreciation of all that I have learned in my seven months on the job and knowing there is still so much more to learn." Michele Mueller

A dedicated toll-free hotline is now available **FOR SCHOOL CERTIFYING OFFICIALS (SCOS) ONLY.**

Toll-free hotline number 1 (855) 225.1159

The hotline is available from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Central Time. SCOs must provide the school's facility code and be listed as a designated VA school certifying official to receive assistance through the dedicated hotline.

TO FIND OUT IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VETERANS EDUCATION AND TRAINING BENEFITS, OR TO SEE HOW MUCH YOUR ENTITLEMENT IS, CALL 888.442.4551.

WHAT ARE VA GI BILL OJT/ APPRENTICESHIP AND MISSOURI SHOW ME HEROES PROGRAMS?

Missouri State Approving Agency and the Show-Me Heroes Program agree to share information regarding VA benefits for on-the-job training and apprenticeship and Show Me Heroes on-the-job training reimbursements to employers.

The VA program for on-the-job- training and apprenticeship include benefits for eligible veterans and dependents. The minimum training program length is at least six months. Benefits range from \$276 to \$1,341 or more per month paid to the veteran, based on entitlement.

The Show-Me Heroes Program features a 50% wage reimbursement to employers in qualifying training for up to six months. Some veterans may qualify for both programs based on each program approval criteria.

Contact the Missouri State Approving Agency at **1-877-530-2765** or **1-573-751-1250**.

The Show-Me Heroes program phone number is **1-800-592-6020** and the web site is: <http://showmeheroes.mo.gov/>



We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to:

Jefferson State Office Building, Civil Rights Compliance (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/Age Act) 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480p: 573.526.4757 or Relay Missouri p: 800.735.2966.

IOWA

GOV. BRANSTAD ANNOUNCES 2016 IOWA TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Scott Slechta, a 35-year veteran teacher who traces his passion for learning all the way back to the first grade, is the 2016 Iowa Teacher of the Year, Gov. Terry Branstad announced today at Fairfield High School in Fairfield. "Great teaching is the single most important influence on learning inside schools," said Branstad. "Scott Slechta exemplifies the great teaching that is taking place in many Iowa classrooms. I am thrilled that he has taken on the role of a mentor specialist in Fairfield as part of Iowa's new teacher leadership system, which is helping to strengthen instruction across the state." See photos from the 2016 Iowa Teacher of the Year announcement ceremony. Slechta, 57, has taught English-language arts at Fairfield High School since 1984. He has served in many district and state leadership roles during that time. Slechta is known for challenging his students to learn and to push their own boundaries. Perhaps even more important is that Slechta challenges himself – after every single lesson - to be a better teacher.

"Scott Slechta's commitment to innovation and lifelong learning are an inspiration," said Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds. "His tireless focus on how to be a more effective teacher has served his students extraordinarily well, and is a model for the new teacher leadership system rolling out across Iowa."

"Great teachers have a monumental impact on their students and challenge their colleagues to keep learning and growing," Iowa Department of Education Director Ryan Wise said. "The leadership of Scott Slechta and many other outstanding educators will help guide our state as we work to give all students an excellent education."

Slechta grew up on an Iowa farm and can recall by name each teacher going back to first grade who inspired him to pursue teaching – and English-language arts. In his Teacher of the Year application, Slechta credited other teachers for contributing to his understanding of teaching and learning, but said his students have been his main influence. "I work hard on days when teaching isn't easy. I try even harder on days that are really difficult," Slechta wrote in his Teacher of the Year application. "All in all, I hope to teach students curriculum-based knowledge as well as the qualities of persistence and perseverance, dedication and determination, and initiative and wisdom in order to accomplish great things."

Tracy Andermann, an Iowa State University freshman who wrote a letter of support for Slechta during her senior year at Fairfield High School, said Slechta exemplifies the teaching trifecta: challenging, creative and caring. "I've heard my fellow classmates say that while they didn't like English, they took Mr. Slechta's classes because they heard how much he prepares them for the future," Andermann wrote. "Also, since he is such a good teacher, my peers are rushing to squeeze in as many of his classes as possible into their schedules. They know what a huge opportunity his classes provide."

Slechta likens teaching to everything else that evolves. For instance, Fairfield High School's aging art-deco structure recently went through a renovation. Effective teaching requires the same regular updates. "As a teacher, I undergo deconstruction and rebuilding in what I do and how I do it," he said. "I create my own blueprint for 'remodeling and renovation' that will make me be a better teacher." All teachers need to be reflective of their practices and to be willing to "remodel and renovate," he said. "You need to look at your past to know where you are and where you want to go." In addition to teaching and directing plays, Slechta is active in his community, and last year received Fairfield's Citizen of the Year for his volunteer services. He enjoys swimming and participating in 5K runs, where his goal is "always to finish, but my second goal is to finish with a good time." He and his wife, Tricia, live in Fairfield and have four children: Margaret Way, Emily, Claire and Price.

More information about educator preparation in Iowa can found at <http://educateiowa.gov/>



MISSOURI

BLUE SPRINGS ELEMENTARY TEACHER LINDA GLASGOW NAMED MISSOURI'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Linda Glasgow knew at a young age that education was her calling. "I played school and was always the teacher, volunteered to teach younger children at church, mothered my siblings and neighborhood children and worked at a childcare center in high school," said Glasgow, a third-grade teacher at John Nowlin Elementary School in Blue Springs. On Wednesday, Glasgow was honored as Missouri's 2015-16 Teacher of the Year during a surprise assembly at the school. "Linda Glasgow has a unique thirst for learning and positively impacts students each and every year," said Blue Springs Superintendent Dr. Jim Finley. "She is a leader, mentor and collaborator, and she inspires those around her through her example. The district is honored, proud, and elated to have Linda on our team, and we are confident she will represent our district and state well."

Glasgow, who is in her 30th year in education, is lauded by her peers for the ability to get the most out of students while sharing her knowledge with teachers and parents.

This unique ability was on display last school year when Glasgow invited other teachers to visit her classroom during an English language arts writing lab she conducted.

"As I debriefed with those teachers (about the writing lab), they were in awe of the work Linda's third graders were doing, and grateful for the opportunity to learn from her," said Kacey Roush, principal of John Nowlin Elementary. Glasgow began teaching in 1984 and has been with the Blue Springs School District since 1987. During her 30 years as a teacher she has taught students in grades K-4, and has served in numerous special education roles. She also serves as an adjunct instructor at Graceland University. "Truly, I know that I am blessed to have the career of my dreams and to participate in the miraculous journey of each school year," said Glasgow.

Glasgow is Missouri's representative for the National Teacher of the Year competition and will be honored at a banquet Oct. 26th along with five other finalists:

- Kimberly Dailey, special education teacher at Lindbergh High School, St. Louis, through Special School District of St. Louis County
- Michael Dragoni, visual arts teacher at Buder Elementary School, St. Ann, Ritenour School District
- Amy Krinke, music teacher at Lee's Summit West High School, Lee's Summit R-7 School District
- Yulia Kotets, English language learner specialist at Willow Brook Elementary, Saint Louis, Pattonville R-III School District
- Melissa Nussbaum, 7th grade science teacher at Truman Middle School, St. Louis, Lindbergh Schools

The Department conducts the Missouri Teacher of the Year program with financial support provided by the Boeing Company and the Monsanto Fund.

More information about educator preparation in Missouri can found at dese.mo.gov/eq/ep/.



NEBRASKA

GOV. BRANSTAD ANNOUNCES 2016 IOWA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Tim Royers, a social studies teacher at Millard West High School, was named Nebraska 2016 Teacher of the Year today during a surprise award presentation. Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt and Deputy Commissioner Deborah Frison presented the award. Royers was one of five finalists for Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

The following teachers were finalists and will be recognized as Awards of Excellence winners:

Lori Boudreau of Papillion-La Vista High School in Papillion

Lynn Hill of Millard South High School in Omaha

Daniel Schaben of Arapahoe Public School in Arapahoe

Jayson Stoddard of Hastings Middle School in Hastings

Royers graduated from Millard West High School in 2003 and returned "home" to his alma mater as a social studies teacher in 2007. In addition to social studies, Royers has served as a debate coach since 2007, but stepped down this year to focus more on his classroom and to begin teaching all Advanced Placement courses offered by the school's social studies department. Royers wrote in his Teacher of the Year application that the objectives he sets for himself each school year are "entirely centered around the students."

"What I want them to take away is the ability to think critically, to consider multiple perspectives, to be able to assess causation over an extended period of time," he wrote. He said the number of his students who take upper level electives in Advanced Placement European History and World History after leaving his classroom demonstrates his success at inspiring his students. "Passing my passion for learning on to the next generation," he said, is his greatest contribution to education.

Royers is an eight-year veteran teacher who earned a Bachelor's Degree from Northwest Missouri State University and a Master's Degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. A panel of Nebraska educators selected Royers as the 2016 Nebraska Teacher of the Year. The Teacher of the Year program recognizes the contributions of classroom teachers who are exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled and teachers who have the ability to inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn.

Royers and the Awards of Excellence winners will be honored by the State Board of Education at a November luncheon. Royers will participate in the national Teacher of the Year competition later this year.

More information about educator preparation in Nebraska can found at www.education.ne.gov/tcert

KANSAS

BLUE VALLEY USD 229 EDUCATOR NAMED 2015-16 MILKEN FAMILY FOUNDATION EDUCATOR

TOPEKA – Bill Smityman, who teaches high school language arts, was named a Milken Educator on Monday, Oct. 26, by the Milken Family Foundation in a surprise ceremony at Blue Valley Northwest High School. As a Milken Educator, Smityman will receive an unrestricted cash award of \$25,000. Lowell Milken, Milken Family Foundation and co-founder, was joined by Kansas Education Commissioner Randy Watson, Kansas Deputy Commissioner Dale M. Dennis and Blue Valley Unified School District 229 interim superintendent Al Hanna for a surprise presentation at the school where Smityman teaches. Smityman was unaware he was being considered for the award until Milken revealed the name of the 2015 Milken Educator to the applause and cheers of fellow teachers, administrators and students.

Smityman is one of about 40 educators around the country being recognized this year with the ME distinction. Candidates for the award are early- to mid-career educators who have shown evidence of exceptional educational talent through effective instructional practices and student learning results and who have shown exemplary educational accomplishments outside of the classroom. Smityman, who attended Blue Valley Northwest High School himself, is considered one of the school's most revered teachers, Milken said.

"Bill Smityman is a demanding teacher and it shows," Milken said. "His students produce strong results and consistently score higher than district, state and national averages. But they also realize he's someone who truly cares about their lives, their education and their future success. We believe he will be an integral addition to the Milken Educator family." Smityman has been teaching for 15 years at Blue Valley USD 229 and is described as an exceptional career educator who is admired by his students. He teaches AVID and has served on several building leadership teams. He also has served as a SAT/ACT coordinator, professional development presenter and on the curriculum revision committee. Smityman was a Teacher of the Year nominee in 2006 and 2011. He received his bachelor of science in education in 2000 from Drake University. Smityman earned his master of science in education in 2004 from Baker University.

"He is one of the few teachers who are able to push students, have extremely high expectations and hold the reputation as being a 'tough' teacher while also being beloved and admired by those same students," Sue Dole, deputy superintendent of education services for USD 229, wrote in a nomination letter. "Students and parents know that he is fully invested in student success and they trust him and his learning processes." Kansas joined the ME program in 1992 and Smityman is the 63rd Kansas ME recipient. More than \$1.5 million has been awarded in Kansas since the beginning of the program. The Milken Award recognizes exemplary elementary and secondary school teachers, principals, and specialists who are furthering excellence in education. The award alternates yearly between elementary and secondary educators. They are sourced through each participating state department of education, which appoints an independent blue ribbon committee to confidentially review candidates for recommendation to Milken Family Foundation.

"Bill Smityman is a great example of Kansas' outstanding teachers," Commissioner Watson said. "It's always an honor to recognize teachers like Bill. He dedicates so much of his time to his students and serves as a mentor to them. The Milken Family Foundation understands how important these contributions are to our nation. I want to thank the foundation for providing us the opportunity to recognize some of Kansas' finest teachers."

The Milken Educator Awards have grown to become the nation's largest teacher recognition program. Since its inception in 1987, the Milken Educator Awards have recognized nearly 2,600 educators, providing more than \$66 million in awards. The award program is one of several programs sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation in the areas of education and medicine.

More information about educator preparation in Kansas can found at www.ksde.org