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Two Lindenwood Alumnae Receive Milken Educator Awards

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December 20, 2023

Two Lindenwood University alumnae received 2023-24 Missouri Milken Educator Awards in November. Leah Lawrence and Meghan Menchella were honored with the awards, which included a \$25,000 cash prize to be used for any purpose.

Milken Educator Awards Vice President Stephanie Bishop and Missouri Commissioner of Education Margie Vandeven surprised Lawrence and Menchella with their awards during their respective schoolwide assemblies in front of students and colleagues.

Created by Lowell Milken in 1987, the Milken Educator Awards have rewarded and inspired excellence in the world of education by honoring top educators around the country, according to the organization's website. These awards target early-to-mid-career education professionals for their already impressive achievements and, more importantly, for the promise of what they will accomplish in the future.

With these awards, Lawrence and Menchella highlight Lindenwood's mission of providing real experience and real success by providing hands-on experience and wisdom from established professionals.

Lawrence is a three-time Lindenwood graduate. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English education in 2007, a Master of Arts in Education in 2012, and an education specialist degree in school administration in 2016.

Today, Lawrence is a seventh-grade English language arts teacher at Hardin Middle School in St. Charles. She is the first Milken Educator Award recipient from the City of St. Charles School District.

"Those of you that know me, know that I'm never at a loss for words," Lawrence said in her acceptance speech. "... I'm humbled to be chosen for this is an incredible honor."

After she received her award, Lawrence remembered why she chose the teaching profession.

“I teach because of my grandma,” Lawrence said. “My grandma was a teacher here in the St. Charles School District.”

Menchella earned a Bachelor of Arts in Middle School Education in 2016. She is an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Crestview Middle School in Ellisville. Menchella is the most recent Rockwood School District recipient of the Milken Educator Awards since 2005.

Menchella leads Crestview’s grade-level U.S. history professional learning community and sits on the school leadership and district social studies curriculum teams. She runs professional development for second-year teachers on best assessment practices, opens her classroom for observation, and works with pre-service teachers.

“I feel so honored and grateful to be recognized,” Menchella said during her acceptance speech. “When I heard my name being announced, I’m not sure if I even remember what happened at that time. I was in complete shock.”