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NEWS RELEASE

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Van Buren Middle School Teacher Honored with a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

Albuquerque —Tamara Dunham, a language arts and science teacher at Van Buren Middle School in Albuquerque was surprised to receive the news of her selection as a 2009 Milken National Educator Award recipient.

The Award, which comes with an unrestricted cash prize of \$25,000, was presented by New Mexico Secretary of Education Veronica C. García, Dr. Tom Boysen, a Milken Family Foundation trustee and APS Superintendent Winston Brooks in front of a schoolwide assembly.

"Ms. Dunham demonstrates her dedication to teaching by finding ways to improve achievement levels of her students," said Secretary García. "By implementing a new approach to teach math, sponsoring MESA students, and encouraging excellence in language arts, she is a model for all teachers."

Dubbed "the Oscars of teaching" by *Teacher Magazine*, the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards were conceived by Lowell Milken to recognize the importance of outstanding educators and encourage talented young people to enter the teaching profession. Unlike most teaching awards, the Milken Educator Awards have no formal nomination or application process. Each year exceptional teachers, principals and specialists—recommended without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's department of education—are stunned with the news of their awards.

"Highly effective educators are the human capital that will equip America's youth in this increasingly competitive global economy," said Lowell Milken, chairman and co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation. "By shining a national spotlight on exceptional people like Tamara Dunham the Milken Educator Awards send a powerful message of the critical role that talented teachers play in preparing young people for a bright future."

Tamara Dunham, who teaches science as well as language arts to 6th-grade students at Van Buren Middle School, is a woman of many skills, passions and projects. She cares so much for her students and the entire student body at Van Buren Middle school, where 99 percent of students qualify for federal and reduced-lunch programs. Dunham finds exciting opportunities for her students in unexpected places. She collaborates with Kirtland Air Force Base to teach students science lessons. For her language arts students, she organizes interactive social nights with local museums so that experts can discuss art and culture with them. For students struggling to keep their grades up, she created and facilitates school focus groups to learn why students are under achieving.

Dunham is responsible for implementing the America's Choice Ramp-Up Advanced Mathematics program, which teaches students entering middle school who are two to three years behind. She has been a

sponsor of Math engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) program since 2001, where she led students to success in state MESA competitions. Her Language Arts students have also won a district poetry contest. Lastly among her many affiliations, she is a sponsor for the Green Hour Project, where students learn and participate in environmental awareness through science activities.

The Awards alternate each year between elementary and secondary educators. Since first presented in 1987 to 12 exemplary California teachers, the Milken Educator Awards program is now the nation's largest teacher recognition program having honored more than 2,400 educators from coast to coast with over \$60 million.

In addition to their cash prizes, the recipients will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Los Angeles to attend the Milken Educator Forum, a national gathering of award-winning educators to address innovative strategies for advancing teacher effectiveness. A highlight of the Forum will be the presentation of the \$25,000 Milken Educator Awards at a recognition dinner and ceremony. They will also join the Milken Educator Network, a group of distinguished educators whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education.

Award Criteria:

Candidates for the Milken Educator Awards are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Individuals whose contributions to education are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight;
- Early- to mid-career educators who offer strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards and the surprise notification events held across the nation, visit <http://www.mff.org> or call [media contact phone number]. Follow the tour on the Foundation's National Notifications blog (via <http://www.mff.org>), YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/milken>), Facebook (Search for "Milken Educator Award.") and Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/milken>).

An education reformer for three decades, Lowell Milken created the Milken Educator Awards to recognize talented teachers and established TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement to generate more talented teachers.

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