



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### MEDIA CONTACTS (on behalf of the Milken Family Foundation):

Katie Elliott, (803) 467-2381 (cell), [katie@keylightcommunications.com](mailto:katie@keylightcommunications.com)

Laura Blank, (646) 245-2496 (cell), [laura@keylightcommunications.com](mailto:laura@keylightcommunications.com)

## Coeur d'Alene Teacher Recognized as One of Nation's Best, Surprised With Milken Educator Award and \$25,000 Prize

*Marcus Ross of Lakes Middle School receives "Oscar of Teaching" for innovative instructional practices and exceptional leadership*

**BIO, PHOTOS AND VIDEO:** <https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/marcus-ross>

**Coeur d'Alene, Idaho (November 20, 2024)** —Lakes Middle School was brimming with excitement this morning as eighth grade math teacher Marcus Ross was surprised with a [Milken Educator Award](#) at a schoolwide assembly in front of cheering students, colleagues, dignitaries and media. The prestigious national honor – created by philanthropist and education visionary Lowell Milken – recognizes exceptional educators for their dedication to excellence in education and is considered the “Oscar of Teaching.” Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley and Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield presented the Award, along with its unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize that Ross can use however he chooses.

“Today we celebrate and welcome Marcus Ross to our vast and distinguished national Milken Educator Network,” said Dr. Foley, who herself is a 1994 Indiana Milken Educator. “Through his energetic and thoughtful approach to individualized learning, he makes every lesson interesting and engaging while supporting students every step of the way. Congratulations, Marcus, and we look forward to the positive contributions and impact you will make as you continue in your professional journey.”

Ross was honored as part of the [Milken Family Foundation](#)'s 2024-25 Milken Educator Awards season. The tour will honor up to 45 pioneering professionals coast to coast, marking the 3,000<sup>th</sup> Milken Educator in the Awards' ranks and celebrating a history of changing lives in communities across America. This season will reach more than \$75 million in individual cash prizes since the Awards' inception in 1987 and over \$145 million invested in the Milken Educator Award national network overall, empowering recipients to “Celebrate, Elevate, and Activate” the K-12 profession and encouraging young, capable people to consider a career in education.

“I’d like to thank the Milken Family Foundation for raising the profile of yet another amazing Idaho teacher, and I’d like to congratulate Marcus on this significant achievement,” said Superintendent Critchfield. “Excellent instruction is the bedrock of a high-quality education, and Marcus exemplifies what it looks like when a teacher commits to being the best for their students and community.”

The Milken Educator Award is not a lifetime achievement honor. Recipients are sought out while early to mid-career for what they have achieved – and for the promise of what they will accomplish given the resources and opportunities afforded by the Award.

### **More about Marcus Ross**

**A Creative Approach to Personalized Learning:** Marcus Ross has a special connection with his students at Lakes Middle School where he teaches eighth grade math, drawing from his own experience as a former Lakes student and product of Coeur d’Alene Public Schools from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. With a kind demeanor and genuine passion for innovative, hands-on instructional techniques, Ross tailors his lessons to meet each student’s individual needs. He injects energy into his lessons by adapting word problems to pique students’ interest, using YouTube videos to simulate the steps to solve them. For a statistics unit, Ross tapped staff members as suspects in a mystery game that rewarded students with a clue each time they mastered a math concept.

Ross’ 4-tier classroom management system, now standard schoolwide, keeps students on task with colored LED lights indicating the tier in place: instructional time (Tier 1), independent work (Tier 2), partner time/peer support (Tier 3) and small group activities (Tier 4).

**A Leader and Role Model for Others:** Early in his career, Ross has established himself as a leader. He presents for Lakes’ Deeper Learning Institute and serves on the PLC Guiding Coalition and the district math academy. Ross is also a model educator in the Lab Host Network, where he has opened his classroom for observation by more than 100 teachers across several states, and by the Idaho Department of Education. This year, Ross is taking his own professional development to the next level at Lakes by completing an administrative internship.

**Building Connections Beyond the Classroom:** Fostering meaningful relationships with his students and their families, Ross encourages parents to write notes for their children to read before testing, invites students to share messages with him on any topic, and writes heartfelt farewell letters to his former students upon their high school graduation. His positive influence serves him well in his roles as a coach for cross-country, boys’ basketball, and track. Additionally, Ross is an advisor for the Kind Club, which hosts a “Drive by Kindness” event where students and parents are greeted cheerfully while arriving to school. He also mentors and supports nearby fifth graders ahead of middle school. A handwritten sign hanging on the wall of Ross’ classroom explains his advice best: “Remember, you are loved and you matter!”

**Education:** Ross earned his Bachelor of Arts in elementary education with an endorsement in mathematics from Boise State University in 2019.

### **The Milken Educator Award Reaps Lifelong Benefits**

- The \$25,000 cash Award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways. Some recipients have spent the funds on their children's or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even adopting children.
- Honorees receive powerful mentorship opportunities for expanded leadership roles that strengthen education practice and policy. Milken Friends Forever (MFF) pairs a new recipient with a veteran Milken Educator mentor; the Expanding MFF Resource and Explorer Program fosters individual veteran Milken Educator partnerships around specific topic areas; and Activating Milken Educators promotes group collaboration in and across states to bring solutions to pressing educational needs.
- The honorees attend an all-expenses-paid Milken Educator Awards Forum in Los Angeles in April 2025, where they will network with their new colleagues as well as veteran Milken Educators and other education leaders about how to broaden their impact on K-12 education.
- Veteran Milken Educators demonstrate a wide range of leadership roles at state, national and international levels.

The Milken Educator Award might come to a community near you! *Who will be next?* Join us as we surprise these remarkable individuals and celebrate their dedication to excellence in education! Follow the tour and use the **#MEA3K** and **#MilkenAward** hashtags on: [Facebook](#) (MilkenEducatorAwards) | [X](#) (Milken) | [YouTube](#) (MilkenAward) | [Instagram](#) (MilkenFamilyFdn) | [LinkedIn](#) (MilkenFamilyFdn) | [TikTok](#) (MilkenAward).

Visit [MilkenEducatorAwards.org](https://MilkenEducatorAwards.org) or call the Milken Family Foundation at [\(310\) 570-4772](tel:3105704772) for more information.

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***About the Milken Educator Awards: “The Future Belongs to the Educated”***

*The first Milken Educator Awards were presented by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987. Created by philanthropist and education visionary Lowell Milken, the Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to K-12 teachers, principals, and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. The Milken Family Foundation celebrates more than 40 years of elevating education in America and around the world. Learn more at [MFF.org](https://MFF.org).*