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◆NEWS RELEASE◆

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## BOISE TEACHER WINS \$25,000 NATIONAL TEACHING AWARD

BOISE, ID --10/07/09 – A science teacher at South Junior High School in Boise received the 2009 Milken Educator Award for Idaho during a surprise assembly Wednesday morning, October 7, 2009.

**Aaron McKinnon**, a 9th grade physical science teacher, won the \$25,000 prestigious award from the Milken Family Foundation for working to raise student achievement and creating innovative ways to keep students engaged in class. He also receives an all-expenses-paid trip to Los Angeles to participate in the Milken National Education Conference focused on solutions to America's pressing challenges in education today.

"Mr. McKinnon is a great example of the highly effective and hard-working educators we have here in Idaho, and I am honored to present him with the prestigious Milken Educator of the Year Award," said Superintendent of Public Instruction **Tom Luna**. "I am also grateful to the Milken Family Foundation for its help to recognize excellent teachers in Idaho and across the United States."

McKinnon's identity was kept secret until Superintendent Luna announced the award during a school-wide assembly at South Junior High School on Wednesday morning. Superintendent Luna was joined by Boise School District Superintendent Dr. **Stan Olson**, Dr. **Thomas Boysen** of the Milken Family Foundation, and Idaho's Teacher-in-Space and Boise State University Distinguished Educator in Residence **Barbara Morgan**.

After the announcement, McKinnon said he was humbled by the award. "I love teaching. It's what I do. I wake up early, get to school early, and I stay late," he said.

McKinnon told his class he would spend a portion of the money throwing a party with an inflatable bounce house so he could teach lessons about increases in pressure and decreases in volume.

McKinnon is now one of 11 educators in Idaho who have received the prestigious Milken Educator Award since Idaho joined the Milken program in 2003. More than 2,300 educators have received the award nationwide.

The Milken Family Foundation was established in 1982 to discover and advance inventive and effective ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The Foundation advances this mission primarily through its work in education and medical research. For more information about the Milken Family Foundation, please visit [www.mff.org](http://www.mff.org).

*To read more about Aaron McKinnon, please see below.*

### **About Aaron McKinnon**

For ninth-grade science teacher Aaron McKinnon, the school day is never boring. His students at South Junior High in Boise, ID, never know what surprises are in store for them during their next physics or math lesson. McKinnon creates interactive ways of learning and teaching, and constantly thinking outside the box— which can oftentimes be the classroom— for innovative ways of presenting information to his students. He regularly uses art projects and outdoor activities to demonstrate math and science problems. He has also been charming students with the hand-made toys he builds to demonstrate the laws of physics. It's no wonder that 95 to 99 percent of students pass his class each semester.

McKinnon has a proven interest in teacher training and sharing his knowledge with others, not just with his students at South Junior High. McKinnon wrote curriculum for a modified physical science class for English Language Learners (ELL) and special education populations and is a district trainer for teachers, as well as a trainer for other districts. He teaches on evenings and weekends at the Idaho Digital Learning academy, and also asks his students to become teachers in their own rite, giving extra credit if students teach a family member what they have learned in class. A man of many skills and interests, McKinnon works as an intramural coach for South Junior High, is an active member at his church and serves as a local Boy Scout troop leader.

**Special thanks for Idaho Department of Education's Melissa McGrath for making available the above news release.**

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