

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STAFF NOTE REVIEW ITEM

Topic: Recognition of Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) Awardees

Date: June 2025

Held In: ☒ Full Board ☐ State Schools ☐ United We Learn

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION:

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 mathematics and science (including computer science) teaching. Established by Congress in 1983, teachers who are selected as PAEMST awardees receive a trip to Washington, D.C., where they attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities. They also receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation (NSF), a presidential certificate and join an elite cohort of award-winning teachers who can influence state/jurisdiction and national science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) teaching.

The **2021** PAEMST Awardee for **Mathematics** is **Benjamin Molberger** from Jefferson County Public School District. Atherton High School Principal said, "Mr. Molberger frequently uses collaborative student learning techniques supported by our math curriculum, which focuses on mathematical inquiry, reasoning and collaborative problem solving, more so than drill-and-kill memorization of formulas and procedures. His focus on mathematics reasoning supports students to start making their own connections and building conceptual understanding before being shown 'the rule.'"

The **2021** PAEMST Awardee for **Science** is **Miranda Messer** from Jefferson County Public School District. The Director of Research and Innovation at Central High School said, "Miranda constantly challenges her students' thinking through effective implementation of design thinking and backwards planning. In her classroom, students are the true agents of their learning."

The **2022** PAEMST Awardee for **Mathematics** is **Nova Pleman** from Fayette County Public School District. Booker T. Washington Elementary's Principal said, "Ms. Pleman's class discussions are a vital opportunity for her to learn more about student thinking and learning, monitor for misconceptions, and steer the learning in a productive direction. She teaches students to listen to one another, ask questions and provide feedback, which allows students to see the value in the process and understand the purpose rather than focus primarily on just the outcome."

The **2022** PAEMST Awardee for **Science** is **Hillary McWhorter** from Fayette County Public School District. The Instructional Specialist shared these words about Hillary, "I have developed a great respect for Hillary and her passion for science and seeing kids do science in a way that connects to the world around them. I am very impressed with her commitment for educating all of her students to high levels of science proficiency, providing science leadership at her school and her promotion of science learning through her summer programs."

The **2023** PAEMST Awardee for **Mathematics** is **Marcus Blakeney** from Jefferson County Public School District. Fern Creek High School's Principal said, "Mr. Blakeney is energized,

rather than defeated, by the challenges of teaching in our post-pandemic world. He is quick to adapt to the new technology and is always finding new ways to provide support and resources to students who struggle.”

The **2023** PAEMST Awardee for **Science** is **Matthew Bryant** from Warren County Public School District. According to one of Matthew’s recommenders, “Matt is clearly committed to opening doors for his own students as well, using physics as a conduit to build their critical thinking and analytical skills, while also building students’ abilities to communicate effectively.”

The awards program is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Congratulations to these educators for demonstrating excellence in mathematics and science teaching!

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Commissioner of Education

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