*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | January 18, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | 2024 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and Milken Award Winners |

At our January 23 meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, I look forward to introducing you to 2024 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year [De’Shawn C. Washington](https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/stoy/#stoy) and Milken Award winners [Michelle (Shelley) Terry and Andrew Rebello](https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/milken.html).

Mr. Washington is a fourth grade inclusion teacher at Maria Hastings Elementary School in Lexington. We [announced his selection](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/press-release-healey-driscoll-administration-announces-2024-massachusetts-teacher-of-the-year?e=583fc2bc03) at an assembly at his school on November 3, 2023, and his time as Teacher of the Year began this month.

Each year, the **Massachusetts Teacher of the Year** program honors a Massachusetts teacher who exemplifies excellent teaching in the Commonwealth. Beyond celebrating the individual, the program looks at the complex work that is involved in educating all students and affirms the importance of the teacher as the single most important school-based factor in improving student outcomes.

While serving as Teacher of the Year, Mr. Washington will continue teaching, attend several convenings of teachers of the year from other states, speak at events, and pursue other opportunities in connection with this recognition.

This year, we received 137 nominations, which panels of DESE staff and previous Teachers of the Year winnowed down to [10 semifinalists and then four finalists](https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/stoy/#semifinalists) before Mr. Washington was selected. He is the first Black male to be named Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

Nominations and applications are now open for the 2025 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, and we hope Board members will [nominate an excellent educator](https://www.doe.mass.edu/amazingeducators/stoy/process-timeline.html) they know.

**Milken Award** winners are chosen through the Milken Award’s confidential selection process and were not aware of their candidacy for the award until they were [surprised with assemblies and $25,000 awards](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/press-release-diman-principal-and-plymouth-teacher-receive-25000-milken-awards?e=49ef851fcf) at their schools on October 20, 2023.

Mr. Rebello is assistant superintendent-principal at Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School in Fall River, and Ms. Terry is an English teacher at Plymouth North High School.

The Milken Award recognizes dozens of exemplary early to mid-career elementary and secondary school teachers, principals, and specialists across the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients attend a national forum and join the national Milken Educator Network. Massachusetts has a long history of partnering with the Milken Family Foundation to recognize excellent educators.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is planning a celebration for all of our recognized educators at Devens in May. We will notify Board members and hope you will be able to attend the celebration.