



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education

**FROM:** Karen B. Salmon, Ph. D.

**DATE:** April, 24, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Recognition of Maryland's 2017-2018 Milken National Educator

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**BACKGROUND:**

On Wednesday, January 24, 2018, Governor Larry Hogan, Dr. Karen Salmon and Michael Milken, President and Co-Founder of the Milken Family Foundation, came together to make an exciting surprise announcement. Allison Felton, a mathematics teacher at Annapolis High School in Anne Arundel County, had been selected as a winner of the prestigious Milken National Educator Award. The announcement took place at an assembly with the entire student body and staff. It also included Speaker of the House Michael Busch, County executive Steve Schuh, and Dr. George Arlotto, Superintendent of Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Maryland has had a partnership with the Milken Family Foundation for twenty-five years and sixty-two Maryland educators have won the Milken National Educator Award, a non-restricted cash prize of \$25,000. With this year's honoree, the Milken Foundation has contributed \$1,550,000 to Maryland's winning educators.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This year's recipient, **Allison Felton**, a mathematics teacher at Annapolis High School in Anne Arundel County, has raised math achievement levels for numerous struggling students. (See attachment – Milken Foundation's Spotlight on Allison and biography.) She will be accompanied by her principal Susan Chittim and her Superintendent Dr. George Arlotto.

The recipient will be introduced and a brief video shown, capturing the excitement of the surprise announcement. Ms. Chittim and Dr. Arlotto will say a few words about Allison and the significance of this recognition.

**ACTION:**

Dr. Darla Strouse, State Director of the Milken National Educator Awards Program, will introduce Ms. Felton; Dr. Salmon and Mr. Smarick will present her with the Milken Educator crystal obelisk and an MSDE/State Board Citation. Commemorative photos will be taken. State Board members will have an opportunity to congratulate the winner.

Allison Felton (MD '17-18)

Teacher  
Annapolis High School  
Annapolis, MD

**Subject(s) taught:** Mathematics

**Grade(s):** 9, 10, 11, 12

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## Biographical Information

At Annapolis High School (AHS), students know that Allison Felton will do whatever it takes to help them succeed in math. The district places a strong focus on ninth-grade success; Felton was hand-picked to work with ninth-graders on the Early Warning Indicator list, who struggle with attendance, behavior and grades. Despite their struggles in other classes at the high-needs, highly-diverse school, they all thrived in and passed Felton's Algebra I class. Even students who lack confidence in their math skills say they know they will succeed with Felton as their teacher. And they do: Felton's students showed 20% growth from 2015 to 2016 in Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) year-end assessments for Algebra I. She works equally well with both high- and low-performing students: In the three years Felton has taught AP Calculus at AHS, an International Baccalaureate (IB) World school, she has increased both the average AP exam score and the size of the program.

In her classroom, Felton uses multiple IB Middle Years Program (MYP) strategies. Students answer debatable, conceptual and factual questions; employ reciprocal questioning, where students quiz their peers on class content; and exemplify "thinking in action" by sharing questions with the class on large white boards. As a member of the school's MYP Synergy team, Felton has led schoolwide professional development on IB tenets like increasing the effectiveness of global awareness, as well as educational technology, instructional strategies, data tracking and assessment, and strategies to support kinesthetic learning. Felton leads the AHS Algebra I team, which has become a beacon of success around the county and now works with the Algebra I teams at two other high-needs schools in the district.

Felton has written Algebra I curriculum used throughout the district and helped schedule review sessions at AHS for PARCC assessments and AP tests. She acts as the backup department chair when needed, mentors pre-service teachers, and was one of two classroom teachers asked to participate in structured walk-throughs as part of the principal's rating process. Felton co-chaired a 12-day Summer Bridge program AHS hosted for rising ninth graders, managing the educational activities, staff budget, field trips and logistics of daily breakfast and lunch for 130 students.

Felton earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 2010 and a master's in teaching in 2011 from the University of Pittsburgh.



# connections

linking talented educators



## Spotlight: 10 Questions for Allison Felton (MD '17)

March 13, 2018



Teaching got easier for [Allison Felton \(MD '17\)](#) when she realized how much her students' home lives differed from her own background: "I realized that they needed someone to listen to them." Allison won Maryland's 2017-18 Milken Award at Annapolis High School on January 24, 2018.

### 1. What went through your mind when you heard your name called at your surprise notification?

**Allison Felton:** That Wednesday morning is one that I will always remember. I was in complete shock. We thought we were going to a wellness assembly. When Mr. [Mike] Milken began talking about the "Oscars of teaching," I began to get extremely nervous; I could feel my heart beating in my ears. A part of me was thinking, "Could this be me? No way! There are so many teachers here at this assembly who are much more deserving." The next thing I knew my name was called, and I just burst into tears. I was overwhelmed with emotion and so appreciative of the recognition.

### 2. How did your students respond to your Milken Award? What impact has it had on them?

**Allison:** The greatest part about that assembly was that most of my current students were there. In fact, one of my AP students was up in the front holding one of the zeros of the prize amount display.

After the assembly was over, many students told me that they knew it was going to be me before they even announced my name. Before the Award my students always worked hard for me, but their work ethic has improved—and now they actually believe me when I tell them I can get them to where they need to be by the end of the year.



### 3. How did you end up in education?

**Allison:** Mathematics has been my favorite subject ever since second grade with Ms. Kirk. She was the first teacher who pushed me in math and genuinely made it enjoyable. When I entered college I declared a major in Mathematics, but the undergraduate program didn't have an education option. I stayed there for an extra year to earn my teaching degree. While I learned how to teach, I also re-learned all the math, but on a much deeper level. It was a great feeling.

I'm sure we've all had a math teacher at some point say, "This is just what you have to do," without telling you why. I wanted to change that. I tell my students the processes behind the math so they can appreciate it. I love teaching because it allows me to be a lifelong learner.

### 4. Who are your role models as an educator?

**Allison:** Mrs. Sue Chittim, our acting principal, was an educator of mathematics at Annapolis High when she started her career. She has supported me over the last few years and has challenged me with several leadership roles in our school. She's inspiring—she can take a very overwhelming topic and break it down, and she also has great strategies for delivering and facilitating the lesson. She is a tremendous leader and has changed our school for the better.

My parents are also my role models. They always supported me in everything that I did. They never let me quit anything and always advised me to find a way to make it better rather than giving up. I am so appreciative that they instilled these values in me. After my first year of teaching, I strongly

considered leaving the profession. After talking with my parents, I ultimately decided to give it another chance. I wouldn't be where I am today without my parents.

"I love teaching because it allows me to be a lifelong learner."



*Allison Felton*  
(MD '17)



##### 5. What memories stand out from your first year of teaching?

**Allison:** My first year was nothing like what I thought teaching was going to be like. You see movies where the teacher is up in front of the room and every student is sitting up, is listening to every word the teacher says, and seems excited about learning. I had high expectations as I walked in on the first day of the year. I was very excited to meet my first group of students and came prepared with awesome icebreakers and a very interesting lesson. I will never forget how I felt at the end of that day.

I cried a lot my first year of teaching. I kept thinking, "This can't be how this is supposed to be." I kept thinking that I had to get them to like me, and if I did that, maybe they would complete their work, maybe they would listen to me. Like many other first-year teachers, classroom management was my biggest struggle. Students would yell at me and then I would yell back.

I learned quickly that this wasn't going to work. I also learned that students needed structure and routines. Many of the students I taught my first year had home experiences that were nothing like the way I grew up. I couldn't relate. I learned over the years that they just need someone to listen to them. I have completely changed my approach to classroom management and have seen great success in establishing routines and holding students to high expectations each and every day.

##### 6. What are students most likely to remember about their time in your class?

**Allison:** I hope my students remember that I had their backs, that I tried to be funny, and that I was a real person. I never sugarcoat anything. I tell my students straight up that the lesson we are going to complete today is going to be tough, but we are going to get through it together. I hope they remember the days that something finally made sense to them.



**7. What's your biggest challenge in the classroom?**

**Allison:** At this point it's time, especially since I teach two math classes that have a big end-of-year examination. PARCC isn't going to change its test date because we didn't finish all the content in time, and same with AP Calculus. I would love to have more time to give students a chance to delve into the content, to truly understand it on a deeper level.

**8. How do you think you'll use your \$25,000 Award?**

**Allison:** College is expensive. I plan to use part of the money to pay down some college loans. Most of it I will use for a down payment on a house. I'm not from Maryland, but I'm ready to plant some roots here.

