



Herb Kohl
Educational Foundation

News Release



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Wauwatosa educator named Wisconsin Elementary Teacher of the Year

Michael Brinen to receive \$3,000 from Herb Kohl Educational Foundation

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers named Michael Brinen of Racine, a physical education teacher at Madison Elementary School in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin's Elementary Teacher of the Year for the 2010-11 school year during a surprise ceremony at the school today.

Evers noted that, as part of the Teacher of the Year honor, Brinen will receive a \$3,000 award from U.S. Senator Herb Kohl, through his educational foundation.

"Recognizing Brinen in a substantial way not only rewards someone who has devoted his life to teaching children, it also focuses attention on the importance of having caring, committed adults in our classrooms," Evers said. "We need quality educators to ensure that every student graduates ready for the workforce or further education."

The Herb Kohl Educational Foundation has awarded millions of dollars to Wisconsin educators, students, and schools over the years. The foundation's teacher recognition program rewards those who demonstrate the ability to inspire students' love of learning, create innovative projects or programs, and show a commitment to community.

"My support of the Teacher of the Year program recognizes that quality teaching has a significant impact on student learning," Kohl said. "Brinen is devoted to teaching and becoming a better teacher. He not only works in his classroom and school, but extends his efforts to shape education in his district and beyond. But, he is not just an educator; Brinen also makes significant contributions to his local community."

Brinen, who switched to teaching after starting his career in business, is recognized by his principal and colleagues for reaching out to students, parents, and the community through innovative lifetime fitness activities. He incorporates academic learning into physical education classes through special units such as "Heart Adventure" and "Moon Adventure." Students explore a model of the heart or learn about the planets and Earth's moon, stopping at activity and wellness stations along the way.

A "Playground Partner" program he developed outfits older students with fanny packs filled with small pieces of recreational equipment, suggested activity cards, and conflict resolution notes so they can help make noontime recess a positive experience for all students. Brinen works with students who have physical disabilities to ensure they

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enjoy physical education success with their peers. His “Greater Madison Open” golf outing has become a rite of passage for fourth- and fifth-graders and their parents.

“Making connections with my students is the most important thing,” Brinen wrote in his application. “... You can have the best ideas, the newest equipment, or the best facilities, but if you don’t have that connection to your students, then you have no foundation for learning.”

A former student called Brinen a gym teacher “who is an inspiration to everyone in every way possible” who teaches students the importance of respect and sportsmanship. Brinen is a regular volunteer for community festivals in Wauwatosa, committee member for the Education Foundation of Waukesha 5K Walk and Run fundraiser, and a leader in curriculum development for the district.

Brinen is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in business management. He earned his physical education certification at Carthage College in Kenosha, a certificate in adaptive physical education from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and a master’s degree in general education from Viterbo University in La Crosse. Evers will recognize Brinen as the Wisconsin Elementary Teacher of the Year during his State of Education address Sept. 16 in Madison.

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NOTES: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2010_111a.pdf.