

State Education Commissioner, Mark K. McQuillan, visited Church Street School in Hamden on Monday, to present a National Educator Award to an unsuspecting Grace Griffin, a grades 4 and 5 elementary teacher in recognition of her outstanding work in the classroom and beyond.

Griffin has been nominated and selected for this honor without her knowledge, thus the Commissioner's visit and the award which includes an unrestricted gift of \$25,000 from the Californian-based Milken Family Foundation – case as a complete surprise.

Commissioner McQuillan said, "Teaching is a calling; it is hard work and it takes great patience, skill, ability and commitment. I am delighted to help bring attention to this good work and to one of Connecticut's best."

Governor M. Jodi Rell said, "This award helps us to remember how vital our teachers are to our success as a state. The work they do is the most important public service. There are thousands of teachers who make great contributions every day in the lives of Connecticut's children. I extend my congratulations to Ms. Griffin for the well-deserved honor; she is clearly a gifted educator and an exemplar of the profession."

Grace Griffin, who holds a masters degree in education, has been a teacher at Church Street School since 1999. Ms. Griffin collaborated with team members to align the math and language arts curriculum with state standards and assessments. As a result, the percent of fifth graders at or above proficiency on the state math assessment rose to 83% and has been sustained for 2 years. The percent of students at or above proficiency in writing rose to 77% and reading from 48% to 61%. Results like these for a Title I School are directly related to high quality teaching. Ms. Griffin goes far above and beyond her classroom duties to increase student learning. She consistently puts in extra time to involve the entire school community in her projects. A talent show, World's Fair, Chess Club, Dance Club, Connecticut Mastery Test Club and a field trip to New York City are just a few examples of initiatives that Ms. Griffin has organized.