

Lowell Milken Center
FOR *Unsung Heroes*



PRESS RELEASE

**Havre de Grace Elementary School's Thomas Dennison Jr Named
2018 Lowell Milken Center Fellow**

The Lowell Milken Center (LMC) for Unsung Heroes in Fort Scott, Kansas, an international educational non-profit, has awarded its prestigious Fellowship to Fifth Grade Teacher Thomas Dennison Jr of Havre de Grace Elementary School in Havre de Grace, MD. Dennison will arrive in Fort Scott on June 25, 2018, for a week of collaboration with LMC staff.

The LMC Fellowship is awarded on the basis of merit to educators who have distinguished themselves in teaching respect and understanding through project-based learning or who have the potential for this distinction. The Center selects exemplary teachers from across America and Europe, drawn from a variety of disciplines, to collaborate on projects that discover, develop, and communicate the stories of Unsung Heroes in history.

Thomas Dennison is a 2016 Milken Educator who uses his platform to share with teachers that they are the greatest motivators and tools a student could have. He consistently hosts visiting teachers to his classroom and leads workshops on engagement and relationship building with students. He has served on the PBIS team at his school for several years and is one of the founding House Leaders for his school's 11 Expectation Core Value House program. He sees his role as a sacrificial role of service and is well respected throughout his local community and his county.

Dennison has taught a wide range of students, from gifted and talented group to high needs special education groups, and from kindergarten to fifth grade. Even at his church, he now runs the elementary program, while previously leading the middle school program and once a month preaching to the adults. Dennison wants each group and every person to see the potential within themselves and to explore what makes them uniquely gifted, in order to make this world better.

In the 2015-2016 school year 100% of Dennison's reading students passed the Scholastic Reading Inventory and the piloted PARCC assessments at the proficient or advanced reading level. Behaviors reports and referrals in Dennison's class decrease dramatically for students each year, although he always acknowledges the importance of fresh starts and grace for each student each day. Students say that he understands them, isn't fake with them, and lets their voices be heard. Guiding students to be real and hardworking remains Dennison's overarching goal.

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Dennison's classrooms are always changing, as is his style and method of delivery, to adjust to who his kids are and who he is growing to be. It is said that there is never a day where there isn't at least one change made to the classroom, and the students often make a game out of being the first to find it. Dennison forces students to take a stance, deal with the real world and the issues it presents and defend their stance in what his school calls: intellectual engagement.

Dennison's teammates and colleagues know him for making students address social justice issues and for challenging what they think they already know.

LMC Executive Director Norm Conard says, "Thomas was the outstanding Milken Educator in Maryland and his work in elementary education will allow us to further our outreach in this area. He will reach a high level with project based learning."

While in Fort Scott, LMC Fellows gain knowledge, educational resources and ongoing support to enhance their classrooms and help students cultivate a passion for learning by creating projects that initiate positive change. Fellows emerge prepared to develop Unsung Heroes projects with their students as they apply and evaluate the stories of role models who have changed the world throughout history.

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