

Obama honors Michael Wallus

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President Obama recently named Michael Wallus, elementary math coordinator at Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), a recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

Wallus is among 102 awardees of the 2012 PAEMST, an annual award that recognizes outstanding K-12 math and science teachers across the country. Wallus is the only teacher from Minnesota to win the 2012 PAEMST.

"It is an honor to receive the Presidential Award, and I am humbled to be in the company of so many outstanding educators," Wallus said. "The award is validation that encouraging students to think about relationships and construct meaning is a cornerstone of quality mathematics education."

News about Wallus' award delighted Superintendent of Schools, Bernadeia Johnson, who quickly expressed her excitement and praised him for his commitment to serve MPS community.

"I'm extremely proud that Mike is a recipient of this prestigious award," said Bernadeia Johnson, Superintendent of Schools. "MPS is fortunate to have him contributing to the success of our schools, teachers and students."

A panel of distinguished mathematicians, scientists and educators chose the winners, who will receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation. The PAEMST winners will visit Washington D.C. for educational and celebratory events in March. They will also meet members of Congress and possibly President Obama.

Prior to joining MPS two years ago, Wallus taught math at Valley Crossing Community School for 16 years. The PAEMST award recognizes Wallus' performance during his classroom years outside of the MPS district.

As the elementary math coordinator for MPS, Wallus trains third- through fifth-grade math specialists. In addition, he works with principals and classroom teachers to identify best practices in mathematics education and helps them understand how students think as they solve math problems.

"In order to teach kids math, you have to understand how they're thinking," he said. "It's not about what the correct answer is that they're getting, it's about what the thinking behind their answer is."

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In an effort to get teachers to that level of understanding, Wallus recently started summer training for K-5 educators to learn about different ways students think of math.

Wallus has served as an adjunct faculty member at Hamline University where he taught master's-level summer courses. He has a Bachelor of Applied Science in elementary education from the University of Minnesota Duluth and an M.Ed. in education from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.