



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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State Superintendent of Education

Alabama  
State Board  
of Education

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Governor Kay Ivey  
President

**SURPRISE \$25,000 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD BRINGS  
NATIONAL RECOGNITION TO BIRMINGHAM EDUCATOR**

*“Instructional Coach Korri Cunningham Earns Prestigious Award for Inspiring Students and Teachers alike at John Herbert Phillips Academy”*

Jackie Zeigler  
District I

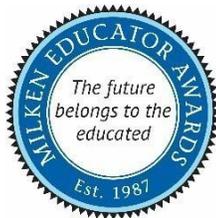
**BIO, PHOTOS AND VIDEO:**

<https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/korri-cunningham>

Tracie West  
District II  
Vice President

**Montgomery, Ala.** — The energy at John Herbert Phillips Academy was electric this morning as a routine assembly quickly turned into a surprise celebration for one of the school’s outstanding educators.

Stephanie Bell  
District III



*Instructional Coach Korri Cunningham* was surrounded by cheering students, colleagues, dignitaries, and media when she was surprised with the life-changing Milken Educator Award — along with a \$25,000 financial prize she can use however she chooses.

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.  
District IV

Milken Educator Awards Vice President Stephanie Bishop was joined by Alabama State Superintendent of Education Dr. Eric G. Mackey to surprise Cunningham with the prestigious Award — often hailed as the “Oscar of Teaching.”

Tonya S. Chestnut, Ed.D.  
District V  
President Pro Tem

Since starting at Phillips Academy in 2015 as an ELA teacher, Cunningham has excelled both in the classroom and as a valued member of the school’s instructional leadership team. Her unique skill set working with teachers and students – combined with her longer lens on school goals – has equipped her with the tools and resources necessary in her current role.

Marie Manning  
District VI

“Korri Cunningham’s remarkable leadership, resourcefulness and ability to build solid relationships have made her a trusted, respected leader in the school and district,” said Bishop, who is also a 2001 Virginia Milken Educator. “I am honored to welcome Korri to the Milken Educator Network, and to celebrate both her achievements today and potential to positively impact the profession for decades to come.”

Belinda McRae  
District VII

Cunningham, the sole Alabama recipient this season, is among up to 75 recipients across the country this school year who will be awarded as part of the Milken Family Foundation’s Journey to the 3,000<sup>th</sup> Milken Educator.

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.  
District VIII

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
Secretary and  
Executive Officer

—more—

#### ***SURPRISE \$25,000 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD BRINGS NATIONAL RECOGNITION TO BIRMINGHAM EDUCATOR***

This season will reach \$75 million in individual financial prizes spanning the length of the initiative and more than \$144 million invested in the Milken Educator Award national network overall, empowering recipients to “Celebrate, Elevate, and Activate” the K-12 profession and inspiring young, capable people to pursue teaching as a career.

Cunningham was completely unaware of her candidacy for the Award. Milken Educator Award recipients are sought out while early to mid-career for what they have achieved — and for the promise of what they will accomplish given the resources and opportunities afforded by the Award.

"Now more than ever, it is important to have the very best and brightest teachers in our classrooms to help prepare our students for life and adulthood. It is evident that Mrs. Korri Cunningham goes above and beyond what is required of her to empower students and help them reach their highest potential," Dr. Mackey said. "It's teachers like Mrs. Cunningham who make a difference inside Alabama classrooms and throughout our communities. We are proud to say she is an Alabama public school teacher!"

#### **More about Korri Cunningham**

**Providing Schoolwide Support:** As an instructional coach, Korri Cunningham is a role model to colleagues and students alike at John Herbert Phillips Academy (JHPA). A former English language arts teacher, Cunningham draws from her classroom experience to further student success at JHPA. She supports teachers in lesson planning and timing, then demonstrates best practices through lesson modeling, observation, and mentorship.

**Driving Results:** Cunningham has taken extra steps to further her own instructional knowledge by becoming a trained teacher consultant through the Red Mountain Writing Project as well as completing International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum training and spearheading IB coordination at JHPA. Her implementation of the IB curriculum portfolio project empower students to explore a range of cultures and principles through their analysis of classic novels and short stories. This project played a key role in securing JHPA's IB World School renewal. Cunningham's support both inside and outside of the classroom has contributed to JHPA's state A rating, while her use of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process has been instrumental to building schoolwide climate and culture.

**Elevating Instruction:** Cunningham provides her colleagues with a variety of resources to support implementation of state curriculum standards. She has amplified her knowledge by leading professional development on literacy instructional strategies, motivating educators districtwide to further their teaching practices. Other notable school and district leadership roles include Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP) IB coordinator, district reading curriculum review team member, and advisor to JHPA's National Junior Honor Society. Cunningham also assists the JHPA administration team with curriculum and operational preparations, ensuring a smooth back-to-school transition for students and staff.

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**Education:** Cunningham earned an Associate of Art in English from Lawson State Community College in 2011, a Bachelor of Science in secondary education-English from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2015, and a Master of Education in instructional leadership from the University of West Alabama in 2021.

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