

CTU President and city officials surprise Golden Apple winner

On May 6, Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) President Marilyn Stewart, Mayor Richard M. Daley, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Board President Rufus Williams, CPS Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins, CPS CEO Arne Duncan and other well-wishers surprised Brooke Thompson with the news that she was chosen as a 2008 Golden Apple Award for Teaching Excellence winner.

Ms. Thompson, a kindergarten through eighth-grade music teacher at Peirce School of International Studies, was directing a dance rehearsal for her students when photographers, news cameras, and reporters entered the gym and slowly surrounded her. Mayor Daley pushed through the media barrier to deliver a bag of red apples with one very symbolic golden apple inside.

Ms. Thompson, a CTU member, refers to her music room at Peirce as the “Taj Mahal” of music rooms. She teaches her students lessons in language arts, math, and science through music and believes “every child has music within them.”

Through shocked tears Ms. Thompson explained to the cameras how thankful she was for the recognition. After answering media questions she politely excused herself to give her husband an emotional hug.

Across the city five other CPS teachers, and CTU members, were also honored with a 2008 Golden Apple Award. The other teachers surprised were Monica Gil, seventh-grade teacher at Gray Elementary; Samina Khan, sixth through eighth-grade science teacher at Clark Academic Preparatory Magnet High School; Donnell White, a seventh and eighth-grade math teacher also at Clark; Natalie Neris-Guereca, a fifth-grade teacher at Pershing West Magnet School; John Nieciak, a



sixth through eighth-grade language arts teacher at Sheridan Math and Science Academy. Clark Academic is the first CPS school to have two teachers receive the award in the same year.

The winners were chosen from 850 nominees who were then narrowed to 31 finalists throughout the Chicago area. Thirteen of the finalists were CPS teachers.

The winners will receive a tuition-free spring term sabbatical at Northwestern, an IBM computer, \$3,000, and membership into the Golden Apple Academy of Educators — 220 expert teachers who work together to ensure children have the quality teachers they deserve.

Golden Apple has also chosen Teachers of Distinction for the second year. This second-tier award recognizes other superior teachers. These teachers and the Golden Apple winners will be recognized at an award ceremony held on September 6.

Mayor Richard M. Daley (above, left) and other city officials surprise Golden Apple winner Brooke Thompson (above, right) during a dance rehearsal with her students. Mayor Daley presents her with a bag of red apples and one golden apple. After the initial surprise, CPS Board President Rufus Williams (left) congratulates Ms. Thompson. Chicago Teachers Union President Marilyn Stewart also extends her congratulations (below). She also speaks at the press conference held in the school's library (below, left) and explains the importance of “Teacher for a Day” to highlight the great work teachers like Ms. Thompson do. *PHOTOS BY JENNY CELANDER*

