

# LakeZurichCourier

## Middle School North teacher receives Golden Apple

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/lakezurich/news/950623,lz-apple-051508-s1.article>)

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Dan Morvaji, a 6th grade social studies teacher at Lake Zurich Middle School North, jumped up on a countertop in his classroom when he was surprised with a Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching May 7.

But that wasn't an unusual occurrence for Morvaji (rhymes with Hawaii). On the first day of class, he jumps up on a table at the head of his classroom and promises his students plenty of fun in the upcoming school year.

Morvaji, who has been teaching for 13 years, four at Middle School North, was named one of 10 Golden Apple winners from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties. Morvaji's stand out teaching methods include making videos to help illustrate his units, performing rap songs about the Chinese dynasties and getting to know each of his 140 students.

"I try to learn at least one detail about each kid after the first few months to have that in my back pocket," Morvaji said after learning of his nomination in February.

Morvaji's students were nearly as excited as he was to find out he had been named a winner.

"We have the number one teacher in the universe," Scott Godsey, one of Morvaji's students, yelled out as a number of other students entered the classroom, offering a round of high fives for an obviously adored teacher.

Godsey said Morvaji's projects make learning more fun than just reading from a text book and taking a test.

In fact, the word "test" is not even allowed in the classroom. Morvaji and his students refer to tests as "fuzzy puppies" to help put the students at ease to do well. The words weird and hard also are not allowed in Morvaji's classroom. Instead, students are asked to use the words different and challenging.

"Learning doesn't have to be all about books and he makes learning fun," said Justine Panzeca, another of Morvaji's students.

Morvaji's main motivation for teaching is the desire for his students to excel and make a seamless transition from elementary school to junior high.

"I want them to have a good feeling going forward," Morvaji said.

Morvaji will receive a tuition-free spring-term sabbatical at Northwestern University; a personal computer from IBM; \$3,000; and membership in the Golden Apple Academy of Educators, which now has inducted 220 expert teachers who work together to ensure that all children have the excellent teachers they deserve, according to a press release from the Golden Apple Foundation.