

7 of 10 winning Chicago-area teachers are surprised with Golden Apple Awards

Dedication to students earns area teachers Golden Apple Awards

By Azam Ahmed and Lisa Black | Tribune reporters
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Special Education teacher Gloria Moyer is congratulated by student Jasmin Washington, 9, after winning a 2009 Golden Apple Award at James Otis Elementary School in Chicago. Moyer, who has been at Otis Elementary for over 30 years, teaches resource skills to visually impaired students. (Tribune photo by Michael Tercha / May 12, 2009)

They call her the "Queen of the Round Table," though the impact Gloria Moyer has on her students' lives reaches far beyond the small brown table where she teaches visually impaired children at Otis Elementary School in Chicago.

The veteran educator advocates for special needs children and fiercely believes they should be looked at the same way as every other student: capable of achieving anything.

Moyer's students and colleagues know this, and now the public does too. On Tuesday, she won a Golden Apple Award, an honor bestowed annually on 10 educators for excellence in teaching. Six others in the city and suburbs got the award Tuesday; the final three will be surprised Wednesday.

A line of school officials, media and supporters snaked down the hallway at the West Town school Tuesday morning to surprise Moyer. At the head of the line, [Chicago Public Schools](#) CEO Ron Huberman held a bouquet of flowers.

As soon as the crowd entered, Moyer shot up from her seat and covered her face with her hands, tears welling in her eyes. Her students, seated at the round table, remained quiet.

Huberman, aware the children couldn't see the entourage, explained: "Your teacher was named one of the best teachers in the whole state of Illinois."

The kids squealed with delight.

"All that work she does, she earned it," said former student Miguel Soto, 14. "She's awesome."

Moyer and her fellow winners get a tuition-free spring-term sabbatical at [Northwestern University](#), a personal computer, \$3,000 and membership in the Golden Apple Academy of Educators.

"I have the best job in the world," Moyer said. "When you love what you do, it makes it wonderful to come to work."

At [Sprague](#) Elementary in [Lincolnshire](#), a similar scene unfolded in Peter Schreurs' 1st-grade classroom.

Inside, two comfortably worn couches sit facing each other, allowing children to relax and read. Job postings for chores such as "line leader" and "banker" pay up to 10 cents per week for students who successfully fill out applications and perform their duties. Sometimes, Schreurs holds an auction and students use their money to bid for goodies such as chalk.

That approach earned Schreurs a Golden Apple.

"I truly feel blessed to be here," said Schreurs, 32, of [Wauconda](#), who has taught at Sprague for two of his nine years in teaching.

Juthica Jhangiani, whose daughter, Geeta, 8, was in Schreurs' class last year, said that he worked with each child, differentiating instruction to fit their needs. "She had an amazing experience," she said.

The other winners announced Tuesday: Michelle Mangold, a 1st and 2nd grade teacher at Dryden Elementary in [Arlington Heights](#); Christina Hayward, a kindergarten teacher at [University of Chicago](#) Lab Schools; Jennifer Phares, a 1st grade teacher at Bright Elementary on the South Side; David Sobel, a physical education teacher at Huntington Ridge Elementary in Palatine; and Maria Hernandez, a 3rd grade bilingual teacher at Ruiz Elementary on the West Side.

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