

U. of C. Laboratory Schools teacher Christina Hayward wins Golden Apple Award

Receives tuition-free spring sabbatical at Northwestern, personal computer, \$3,000

May 13, 2009

BY [STEFANO ESPOSITO](#) Staff Reporter/sesposito@suntimes.com

One minute, Christina Hayward's kindergarten students were quietly clustered around her as she prepared to read them one of Aesop's fables.

A moment later, as 50 or so grown-ups crowded into her sun-filled classroom Tuesday morning, kiddie pandemonium broke out. Children squealed, shouted, bounced up and down, did somersaults.

» [Click to enlarge image](#)



Christina Hayward, a kindergarten teacher and 2009 Golden Apple Award recipient, with her class.

(Brian Jackson/Sun-Times)

"Oh my goodness," said a shocked Hayward, as the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools teacher was told she had been named a winner of the 2009 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. She was one of 10 winners from a pool of 972 nominees from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties.

"She's really nice," explained David Vahey, 6, of his teacher. "She plays with us nicely and she reads books. She reads funny books, big books, tiny books."

David's mother, Lisa Vahey, nominated Hayward for the award. Vahey said Hayward is such a good teacher because she never has a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching.

"She's really an excellent teacher for every kid," Vahey said.

In Hayward's class, 6-year-old kids keep daily journals, they learn about everything from the importance of corn in American history to why Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks matter.

"It's such a great way for kids to tap into their sense of what's fair and what's right," Hayward said. "Even though they are big subjects ... we break them down into ways that kids are able to understand."

Annual tuition for kindergarten is \$16,674, a lab schools spokesman said.

At the start of the school year, Hayward -- with her longtime assistant Kristin Smith -- has her students lie down on a wide roll of paper to trace the outline of their bodies. Kids then fill in the "body portraits," which are hung up around the perimeter of the classroom. Hayward said the exercise helps kids feel like the classroom belongs to them.

Hayward, who has been teaching at the lab school for eight years, describes kindergarten as "just the perfect developmental stage."

Hayward's award includes a tuition-free spring-term sabbatical at Northwestern University, a personal computer and \$3,000.

Gloria Harper, Golden Apple's chief program officer, said Hayward is remarkable, in part, because of "how she chooses to engage her students, to ask questions, to [challenge them] to think critically and problem-solve. She kept asking them, 'How can you make a difference in the world?'"