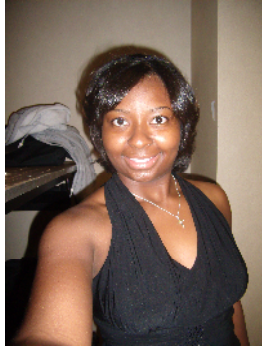


Golden Apple
Success Stories
Quinn Daniels
Golden Apple Scholar 2004



A teacher's first year can be both challenging and exhausting. For Golden Apple Scholar Quinn Daniels, her first year teaching seventh grade language arts and social studies at Chicago's Howe School of Excellence left her invigorated and full of ideas.

Daniels spent her summer break thinking about the mentoring program she wants to create that encourages middle school students to make college part of their plans for the future. She reflected on her first year and called on a vast network of world-class Golden Apple teachers to help make her lessons even better. She prepared for her second year of teaching with confidence and a determination to win the trust of her students and lead them to success.

"Success is different for every kid," Daniels said. "If a kid only ever gets Ds, getting a C+ is success. If a kid skips school all the time, getting them interested enough to show up to class is success. I don't make judgments about my students' potential for success based on where they came from, what they look like or anything else. I just try and give every student the teacher they deserve."

How does a young woman just out of college come to such astute conclusions? With three times more pre-service classroom training than most other new teachers receive and the support of an organization like Golden Apple.

"Golden Apple shaped me, not just as a teacher, but as a whole person. They helped me realize that I'm more than a seventh grade teacher. I'm a person with feelings of my own. And I need to understand those feelings before I can help anyone else," Daniels explained. "You have to look at yourself first before you can go in and 'save' kids and make a difference in their lives."

For most of the kids that come through the Howe School of Excellence on Chicago's west side, education is the way to escape from poverty, violence and crime. In their lives outside of school, there are very few people they can trust, so Daniels makes it a priority to show them every day that she is someone they can trust--someone who will listen to them and who is rooting for them to succeed.

"If I don't set high expectations for my students, what am I there for?" she asked. "And I have to do everything I can to make sure they reach those expectations, so I try to connect what I'm teaching to their everyday lives."

Daniels can relate to their everyday lives on a personal level. She grew up raised by a single mother because Daniels' father had been sent to prison. She lived in Chicago's South Side and experienced first-hand what many of her students go home to everyday.

It was a teacher, Mrs. Staples in fifth grade, who inspired Daniels to want more out of life.

"I knew then that I wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't know how I could make it happen," she says.

Daniels discovered Golden Apple through a high school history teacher, Mr. Bell who saw in her an early passion for teaching and nominated for her for the Scholars program so that she could pursue her dream.

The Golden Apple Scholars program provided Daniels with financial support for tuition at DePaul University, as well as extensive supplementary education, classroom experience, mentoring and peer

networking. At Golden Apple Summer Institutes, Daniels and other aspiring teachers spent six weeks of every summer vacation, for four years after high school graduation, immersing themselves in the ins and outs of teaching.

"College was mostly about theory, with little practice," Daniels said. "Golden Apple gave me practice every summer, and they instilled in me a sense of social justice, a commitment to social change. You can't help but be an awesome teacher if you come from Golden Apple.

"Golden Apple was a gift. They shaped my life. Saved my life, really. If it wasn't for Golden Apple, not only would I not be as good a teacher, I wouldn't be a teacher period."