



All Children Deserve Excellent Teachers

Golden Apple Scholars program in jeopardy Senators support continued state funding

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Proven success stories in educational reform efforts deserve to be emulated, not eliminated. That is why we were surprised



Sen. Schoenberg

and disappointed to learn that Governor Blagojevich's proposed budget for the coming fiscal year failed to include funding for the widely acclaimed Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program. These funds must be restored for 2005. If allowed to stand, this cut would essentially sever a major artery that assures our most needy kids get the best teachers. It also runs contrary to the expressed goals of an administration which has strongly advocated for high quality teachers for poor kids.

This sterling advanced teacher-preparation and internship program of the Golden Apple Foundation, active since 1989, now has 800 participants currently teaching or on their way to teaching in challenging schools throughout Illinois. This program has proven success in delivering high quality teachers to poor and minority kids, who usually get the least qualified teachers. Golden Apple's teacher-retention rate is 90 percent compared to the state's 50 percent or less, astonishing especially because these young teachers work in challenging school

settings deserving of talented and well prepared teachers.

Yet, despite admitting the strength and quality of this program, the governor's



Sen. Cronin

initial budget eliminated its funding, mystifying its advocates in the legislature and education community, and crushing the dreams of its participants and their parents. In response, the administration claims grants and scholarships could be accessible from other sources. But what makes the Scholars program so unique—and so successful—is that it is not a scholarship, but rather a hybrid of advanced teacher-preparation and internship program with a scholarship component. As any great teacher in a school of need will tell you, teaching in a challenging school setting is daunting. The preparation this program offers greatly increases the odds its participants will be successful, inspiring teachers in those deserving schools.

Scholars program succeeds

How does this program succeed? Imagine that you want to become a reading teacher. As a Golden Apple Scholar, you spend your first summer after high school learning about teaching from master teachers, including one nationally known and locally honored for her work in recognizing and helping students with dyslexia. By the next summer you far outpace your college peers in knowledge about teaching reading, and learn to become a teacher who celebrates her students' diversity from a widely published

What you can do

The fate of restoring funding of the Scholars program in the 2005 state budget lies in the hands of the General Assembly, which is in session through the end of May. Golden Apple supporters can take the following steps to garner their votes:

- **Attend the Save our Scholars rally**

April 21 at noon
State Capitol, Springfield (meet on East Steps)

Visits to legislators' offices, noon to 2 p.m.

Buses leave DePaul, 2312 N. Clifton at 7:30 a.m.

Call for ISU & Bradley departures—312/407-0433 exts. 112, 113, 118, 119 or 109

- **Write to your state legislator.**

Find him or her at
www.elections.state.il.us/DLS/Pages/DLSAddressCrit.asp

- **Sign the on-line petition** urging the governor to restore funding. Find it at www.petitiononline.com/GoldAppl/petition.html

- **Read the latest developments on our web site:**
www.goldenapple.org

expert on diversity issues.

Now imagine being an exhausted first-year reading teacher in a tough school setting and having a distinguished mentor

Continued on back page



2004 Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois at their March 27 induction.

INSIDE GOLDEN APPLE

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Editorials back Scholars funding

Restoration of the Scholars funds is supported by newspaper editorials across the state:

- **Daily Herald** (March 15, 2004): "...The same governor who says education is a priority and has a grand plan to reorganize it apparently doesn't see the value of having dedicated teachers groomed to teach where others don't want to teach... Unfortunately...the governor is making a mistake."
- **Chicago Defender** (March 16, 2004): "The moment is at hand for those of us who care about improving education to take action. We who are dedicated to giving kids who attend impoverished schools a terrific opportunity to experience the best in bright young teachers can fight the proposed budget cuts."
- **St. Louis Post-Dispatch** (March 15, 2004): "If the governor genuinely believes in raising the bar for public education, he should spare an outstanding program that trains, inspires and motivates the finest young teachers to battle the toughest problems in public education. Some legislators already are making plans to restore this money. It's the right thing to do."
- **Daily Southtown** (March 22, 2004): "in our view, the Golden Apple Scholar program, which is designed to train teachers to work in the neediest areas of the state, ought to be a top priority.... (It's) absurd to consider eliminating the funding for a program that has a proven record of success in order to save what amounts to a drop in the ocean that is the state's budget."

Senators support continued funding

Continued from front page

visit your classroom, one who has known you for years, assisting you in meeting your challenges during the extremely difficult first years in the profession.

This is the essence of the Golden Apple Scholars program. Long before it became recognized as valuable, Golden Apple pioneered the now common practice of giving prospective teachers early involvement in working in schools coupled with teaching and mentoring from award-winning teachers. The mentoring and instruction they receive during college continues once Scholars enter the profession. The Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program has indeed found the true essence of teacher quality and teacher retention: Advanced preparation during college and specialized mentoring once teaching.

The program's success has been measured and honored with both empiric study and anecdotal evidence. A study by the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2001 showed Scholars enter teaching with more advanced skills. The John F. Kennedy School of Government at

Katie Hogan is already a legend at Curie High School for her passionate devotion to her students. Pam Benn of Elk Grove has become an advocate for her students in Waukegan. Shalanda Johnson offers tough love through her magical teaching to the children of Springfield. A trio of

"...restoration of the Golden Apple Scholars funding at this year's level should be made part of our strategy to insure a sound investment in teaching."

Harvard University named the program one of 15 finalists out of 1,200 programs nationwide for its annual "Innovations in American Government" award, hailing the Scholars program as "a sterling example of public funds used for the common good."

Devoted teachers are critical

As school boards and legislators continue to discuss how to improve student learning and achievement, everyone agrees that talented and devoted teachers are critical for student success. We have learned there is a small legion of such Golden Apple Scholars teaching today in Illinois schools. Nancy Garcia-Serrano of Seward Elementary was recently featured in *The Reader* for having 70 percent of her students meet state standards last year.

Scholars: Terri Emmerich, Krystina Kelley and Tammy Drilling, have brought hope and promise to the students at Cahokia High School through their talent and devotion. These are but a handful out of over 300 Scholars currently teaching, with another 500 on the way!

This program is more than a sound use of state funds. It is an outstanding investment we are proud to have brought to Illinois. Ideally, funding for the program should be expanded to bring its advanced preparation and mentoring to even more teachers. But with the harsh budget realities confronting the governor and the legislature this year, restoration of the Golden Apple Scholars funding at this year's level should be made part of our strategy to insure a sound investment in teaching.

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