



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Official Statement from Golden Apple on President Obama's  
Recent Statements on Education Reform

CHICAGO (February 25, 2009) – Golden Apple, a non-profit organization dedicated to recognizing and developing excellence in teaching, has released the following statement regarding President Obama's recent pronouncements about education reform:

Educators across the country breathed sighs of hope as citizens sent President Obama and thereafter Secretary of Education Arne Duncan from Chicago to Washington. If things are going to get done, we prayed, these are the years and the leaders to do it.

The president and secretary have rightly seen that improving the educational experience of American children will take more than an appeal to a right cause. The issuance of federal dollars, or its withholding, is being used as the lever to bring about stronger standards and much needed change.

This is a new more activist role for the Department of Education, which in the past either made toothless suggestions or decried the state of American education when it wasn't fighting (during the Reagan administration) to remain in existence. Indeed, then Secretary of Education Bill Bennett's depiction of Chicago Public Schools as the worst school district in America was part of the impetus that drove our founders to create the organization I now lead.

Past legislation brought out banner waving that hid the actions of the cynical. Eleven states lowered their standards as a condition for continued funding. We continue to present to employers and the world an underprepared and undereducated future workforce, unable to compete on the world stage as well as students elsewhere.

Adopting college-ready reforms through this new form of leverage is the best way to, as the President stated this week in his speech to America's governors, "break down some of the barriers to reform."



We know what lies behind the barriers: well-intentioned people who believe in the correctness of their position. Meanwhile our students' abilities continue to slide and their prospects continue to dim.

So we approach these years and the work of these leaders with hope truer reform and a brighter day for our students and their future looms.

#### About Golden Apple

Golden Apple began in 1985 with founders Mike and Pat Koldyke and a shared inspiration — to offer outstanding schoolteachers a level of recognition and engagement in the larger work of education reform. Golden Apple's successful track record now spans more than 20 years. Integrated, innovative Golden Apple programs and resources enhance the quality, resiliency, and creativity of classroom teachers and improve teaching and learning throughout Illinois. Qualified, passionate educators — including Golden Apple Award-winners and finalists — lead a small staff of dedicated employees with functional and program expertise. A connected and committed board of directors oversees Golden Apple's strategic direction. Together with a larger community of expert educators, the not-for-profit organization works to ensure that all Illinois children have the excellent teachers they deserve.

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For more information contact:

Jill Morino

Ph: 847-526-2707

Email: [jillm@theharbingergroup.com](mailto:jillm@theharbingergroup.com)