



Golden Apple

Facts and Background

Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois Program

Begun in 1989 by the award-winning teachers of Golden Apple, the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program has grown to over 1,200 statewide participants today, making it one of the largest pre-service teacher internship and preparation programs in the nation. The Scholars program is designed to address the urgent need for resilient and creative teachers serving Illinois students in economically and educationally disadvantaged schools. The program supports Scholars while they pursue an undergraduate education at one of 53 Illinois universities, provides financial assistance for college, and strengthens their teacher preparation. At the heart of the program are four Summer Institutes that provide Scholars with extensive pre-student teacher internships, mentoring and course work on the art of teaching by Golden Apple Award-winning teachers. By the time Scholars finish the program and enter classrooms as teachers, they have acquired more than three times the classroom experiences than traditionally prepared teachers. Golden Apple continues the support of its Scholars after they begin their careers. Scholars are visited and mentored in their first year of teaching, and participate in the annual CORE (Center for Ongoing Renewal and Enrichment) conference for teaching Scholars and their colleagues.

In return for the extensive professional, personal and financial support they receive, Scholars agree to teach for five years in an Illinois school of need identified by having a significant student population from low-income households, or by mediocre to poor performance on state tests.

Now in its 22nd year, the Scholars program now has prepared and presented over 700 Scholars to teach in Illinois, celebrating their first through sixteenth year in the teaching profession. We continue to be proud of the diversity of the Scholar contingent.

The program is unique for several reasons. Scholars receive more intense and more varied teaching experiences than traditionally prepared teachers through the Summer Institute experience. The Scholars program pioneered early involvement in the study of teaching, a practice that subsequently influenced Illinois university teacher preparation. The program enables Scholars to experience the challenges and triumphs of teaching in a high need setting, provides them with opportunity to put theory into practice, lets them experience teaching situations in different subjects and grade levels so they can better decide their specialty, and gives them mentoring from Golden Apple Award-winning teachers and older Teaching Scholars. Through this unique program, Scholars receive invaluable support during the beginning of their collegiate years into their teaching careers, with continued professional development and leadership opportunities thereafter. The program fosters lasting friendships, solid networking, superb enrichment experiences, and mentoring, all designed to strengthen their work with children in Illinois schools of profound need.

A 2001 study of the program by the University of Illinois at Chicago concluded that participation in the Scholars program leads to significant changes in teaching ability. Innovations in Government, an awards program of the Institute for Government Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, named the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program one of fifteen finalists out of 1,200 programs nationwide in its 2001 Innovations in American Government award, citing the Scholars program as "providing superior contribution through use of public funds for the common good."