

Golden Apple Hosts Virtual Roundtable Discussion Of Illinois' Teacher Shortage Crisis, Highlights Importance Of Solutions

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EAST ST. LOUIS - On the heels of an extremely challenging year for students, teachers, and administrators, Golden Apple hosted a virtual roundtable today to discuss the teacher shortage crisis in Southwestern Illinois and statewide and to highlight potential solutions to address it. Golden Apple President Alan Mather moderated the

event alongside participants Jennifer Garrison, Superintendent; Chuck Lane, Superintendent; Julie Wollerman, Regional Superintendent; and Nikki Katich, Golden Apple Accelerator participant.

“The teacher shortage crisis continues to impact teachers and students in every corner of Illinois, and the COVID-19 pandemic introduced an entirely new set of obstacles for administrators trying to fill crucial positions in their district, making an already dire situation even more challenging,” said Alan Mather, Golden Apple President.

“Roundtable discussions like these are essential to continue educating Illinoisans about the crisis, discussing potential solutions, and keeping the teacher shortage crisis top-of-mind as a critical issue here in the Southwest region and across the state.”

According to the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools’ (IARSS) [2020 Educator Shortage Survey](#), 77% of school districts in Illinois report having a teacher shortage problem, and 93% of districts report having a substitute teacher shortage problem. In Southwest Illinois, the numbers are even higher, with 87% of school districts reporting a teacher shortage problem.

“The teacher shortage numbers in our region are concerning, and they won’t improve unless we take real action to address this crisis. Teacher shortages impact our students’ ability to learn and produce unsustainable conditions for our teachers. We need to invest in solutions to help our children and our state,” said Jennifer Garrison, Superintendent.

“The teacher shortage is a crisis we have been dealing with for years, and the additional pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused even higher rates of teacher turnover and retirements,” said Chuck Lane, Superintendent. “It is crucial that we continue having conversations like today’s between local education leaders and organizations with the ideas and strategies to alleviate the shortage and improve conditions for our students.”

To address the teacher shortage crisis and fill teaching positions in critical areas throughout the state, Golden Apple recently launched its Accelerators Program, a one-year teacher residency and licensure program that expedites the preparation of highly-qualified teachers. Accelerators is designed to complement Golden Apple’s long standing Scholars Program, which recruits high school seniors and first-and second-year college students in Illinois to prepare them to thrive as future educators in challenging school environments.

“Participating in the Accelerators program has been extremely effective in preparing me for whatever challenges may come my way as I lead my own classroom this fall,” said Accelerator Nikki Katich. “The students of Illinois need dedicated, well-trained, and enthusiastic teachers now more than ever. I look forward to being that teacher for my

students in just a few short months, and am grateful to Golden Apple for giving me this opportunity.”

As the legislative session in Springfield comes to a close, state legislators must decide how to allocate state funds to impactful programs that specifically address the shortage in central, southern and western Illinois, including the Accelerators Program.

“As we begin to move towards a post-pandemic normal, it is essential that we continue investing in solutions to the teacher shortage crisis and recruit, train, and prepare the teachers that our students deserve,” said Julie Wollerman, Regional Superintendent. “I am always grateful to participate in opportunities like this roundtable to raise awareness on this crisis and discuss solutions that exist to address it, including the Accelerators Program.”

Golden Apple welcomed its inaugural class of Accelerators in June 2020 and placed participants in 22 districts-in-need throughout Illinois. The inaugural class will receive their teaching licenses this summer, and begin teaching this fall.

About Golden Apple

Golden Apple’s mission is to inspire, develop and support teacher and school leader excellence in Illinois, especially in schools-of-need. Our leading-edge preparation delivers exceptional teachers who make an impact. We help students thrive in the classroom and in life. Since our beginning, we have recognized master educators annually; and, these master educators prepare the future generation of teachers. Our vision is an Illinois in which every classroom has a great teacher and to realize this, we are committed to making a material difference in resolving the teacher shortage throughout Illinois. Visit www.goldenapple.org for more information.

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