

Golden Apple Award Thank-You Speech

Patricia Castro

HPCF Grant Awards Reception, November 13, 2019

My sincere thanks, Sara, for your kind words, for championing teachers, and for presiding over the Golden Apple Award Committee with intelligence, dedication, and grace.

Thank you to the distinguished teachers who form the Golden Apple Award Committee, who give of their time and expertise to the process of selecting awardees.

Thank you to the Highland Park Community Foundation, and Chairwoman Nancy Mills, for their vision and many accomplishments in making our community better.

I send thanks to Rachel Levinson Fisher, who nominated me, and to all the teachers, administrators, parents, and students who spoke on my behalf.

What a marvelous thing it is to win the Golden Apple award. I am, even now, elated by the memory of the surprise of the parade of committee and community members, school and district administrators, and my family, entering my classroom to present me with the award. That was followed by an avalanche of congratulatory emails, cards, calls from far and wide, messages from people who understand the significance of the honor and consider me a deserving honoree.

I knew of the Golden Apple, because I had been nominated and because I knew and admired colleagues who were themselves awardees. A Golden Apple award shines a spotlight on exemplary teaching. It establishes a standard, however amorphous, that one may aspire to. Knowledge of the standard in some measure informs the teacher one becomes.

Awards such as this are important, perhaps particularly in the field of education. Recognition by one's peers and community serves not merely to highlight the work and achievements of the individual but of the profession itself. It signals to all that our community understands that the work of educating is of such value that it behooves us to acknowledge it. A Golden Apple award sends invigorating energy through a learning community. It brings honor to the school and the students.

My deepest thanks, Highland Park Community Foundation and Golden Apple Award Committee, for making visible classrooms such as mine that promote equity, creativity, respect, a desire to learn and work hard. Thank you for elevating the work of educators who enable our students to become thoughtful, knowledgeable, well-rounded members of our community and citizens of the world— individuals who, in turn, are intent on making our community and world better.