



## October E-Update

### Excel Academy Students Make High School Connections

Excel Academy hosted its first-ever High School Fair on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Representatives from thirty-six Boston-area high schools were hosted by Excel Academy 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and their families, who prepared a potluck dinner of cultural dishes. For students, families, and admissions officers, sitting down to eat together provided a personal connection, as well as a chance to learn about college-prep high schools and admissions.

The fair was organized by Excel Academy's Dean of High School Placement, Megan Fraker, as part of an effort to increase admissions officers' awareness of Excel Academy's hard working student body. One visitor noted that the fair was "a wonderful opportunity to get to know one student and her family in depth while meeting a variety of members of the eighth grade class. The food was excellent and the company refreshing."

After dinner, students rotated through the rooms, visiting with high school representatives. Eighth grade student Jackie Kioussis and her family enjoyed the fair. "It was fun because I got to talk to a lot of interesting people. You don't know how many options you have until you walk in and see all the schools. I am definitely going to apply to some of the schools I learned about at the fair." Jackie's classmate, Joslin Hernandez, agreed: "I already was really interested in a few schools, but the fair opened my eyes to other schools."

In addition to hosting visitors at Excel Academy, our eighth grade students will continue to visit high school campuses in New England throughout the fall. In addition to campus visits, many students will also participate in admissions interviews for independent schools. Hotchkiss School recently became the first high school to conduct admissions interviews within Excel Academy's walls, sending a representative to speak with students in early October. Hotchkiss also extended a special welcome to Ms. Fraker and 11 Excel Academy students by chartering a bus for a trip to the Hotchkiss campus in Lakeville, Connecticut. Hotchkiss provided meals, a student-guided tour, and class visits for Excel students. Yahaira Acuna, an eighth grade student at Excel Academy, commented that "the enthusiasm of the students and the atmosphere at Hotchkiss were great. People really welcomed us." Juan Landaverde said, "I was struck by how difficult the classes were, but I liked it."

Excel Academy's younger students have also been busy learning about high school. Recently, sixth and seventh grade students traveled to the Pingree School and the Noble and Greenough School. These field trips, a fall tradition for Excel students, gave students a chance to experience the campus atmosphere in-person and to imagine themselves as a successful high school student. Visiting high schools as early as the sixth grade helps each student understand what he or she is looking for in a high school and what it takes to get in

to a competitive school. Megan Fraker noted that the field trips “help motivate Excel students to continue doing top-notch academic work.”

Sixth grade student Leslie Orellana-Fuentes loved the Pingree campus. “The library had a big window looking out onto the pond, and I thought it would be really nice to study there.” Seventh grade student Bilal Hamzeh was inspired by the trip to the Noble and Greenough school: “I want to go to a school like Nobles where you have tons of choices about what classes to take and what activities to do. I think you have a lot of freedom and responsibility at a school like that.” Bilal’s classmate, Alex Escobar, agreed that the trips motivate students. “It made me want to work harder, because if I can go to a school like Nobles, doors to great colleges might be open too.”

Excel Academy students will continue to look toward their academic futures as they apply themselves in the classroom this fall and winter. All students will participate in college field trips in the spring, and eighth grade students will continue working toward attending a college-prep high school next year.