

THE Center for Education Reform



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EXCEL ACADEMY NAMED A NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

Washington, D.C., May 17, 2007 – The Center for Education Reform (CER), the nation’s premiere education reform group, recognized Excel Academy Charter School as a National Charter School of the Year, an honor given to 53 charter schools from across the U.S. at a special awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday.

After the ceremonies, education writers Jay Mathews of the *Washington Post* and Greg Toppo of *USA Today* spoke to representatives from the schools at a Press Club luncheon. The representatives later had a chance to hear from Education Secretary Margaret Spellings and speak with members of Congress at an event on Capitol Hill.

“We commend Excel Academy and the other honorees for their achievement,” said CER President Jeanne Allen. “They are among the vanguard of a school choice movement that provides more than one million children an educational opportunity that might otherwise be unavailable.”

“We are committed to providing every child we serve with a rigorous, college-preparatory education in a safe and structured school environment. This model, coupled with our teachers’ unwavering dedication to the students we serve, has produced extraordinary results,” said Excel Academy Executive Director Yutaka Tamura. “We are grateful to CER for recognizing Excel Academy’s success in preparing urban middle school students for high school and college.”

All U.S. charter schools were eligible for the honor. The selection process began in the fall of 2006, with all schools asked to respond to CER's annual survey. A small percentage of survey respondents were invited to – and ultimately submitted – detailed information for consideration for this recognition.

Evaluation of the schools proceeded along four themes: achievement; planning and execution; satisfaction; and policies and programs. Each theme included additional criteria (12 in total), such as improvement over time; percentage of at-risk students served; meeting mission and goals; and parental involvement. CER identified 53 exceptional schools deserving recognition.

“Charter schools across the nation succeed despite limited resources and oftentimes hostile bureaucratic environments,” said Ms. Allen. “They are the heroes in a civil rights struggle for educational choice, particularly for children and parents of limited means. We’re delighted to recognize some truly shining examples.”

In the 2006-07 school year, there are more than 3,940 charter schools serving over 1.16 million students in 40 states and Washington, D.C.

Charter schools are innovative, public schools designed by educators, parents, or civic leaders that are open by choice, accountable for results, and free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools.

For a complete list of the 53 schools honored today, visit <http://www.edreform.com/csoy/>.

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The Center for Education Reform (CER) creates opportunities for and challenges obstacles to better education for America's communities. Founded in 1993, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to foster positive and bold education reforms. For more information, visit www.edreform.com.

Excel Academy is a public, charter, middle school that has been in operation since September of 2003. The school currently serves 170 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students from East Boston, Chelsea and other neighboring communities, all of whom were admitted through a public lottery. Excel Academy will expand its program to include fifth grade in the fall. Sixty-three percent of students are Latino and 73 percent qualify for the federal free and reduced price lunch program.

Excel Academy students have consistently outperformed their local peers on the MCAS exams, most recently scoring in the top 9 percent statewide on the 2006 English MCAS exam and in the top 6 percent statewide on the 2006 math MCAS exam. Over 75 percent of students in Excel's inaugural eighth grade class earned acceptance to college-preparatory high schools. Excel will graduate its second class of students in June 2007.