



Angie Buitrago and Lionel Martinez, like every member of the Class of 2009, embodied Excel's ideals of leadership, scholarship and citizenship when volunteering at the Red Cross Food Pantry in February.

EXCEL ACADEMY CLASS OF 2009 SET NEW PRECEDENTS

On the evening of June 24, 2009, Dianara Mercedes stood up in front of her fellow eighth grade students and made a simple statement: "We made sure that everything we did was up to high standards, and that we didn't let our teachers, parents and staff down." As the featured student speaker of Excel Academy's Commencement Ceremony, Dianara captured the can-do, pioneering spirit of the school's fourth graduating class.

Excel's Class of 2009 experienced a number of firsts in the history of the school. Class members served as the inaugural appointees of Excel Academy's Honor Council and played an integral role in New Student Orientation. Most notably, they posted the #1 MCAS results in the state with every member of the class scoring Advanced or Proficient on the 2008 English MCAS exam.

The eighth grade students' shared commitment to pursuing educational excellence and acting as leaders of strong character lent to their success in the college-preparatory high school admissions process. With the support of Megan Fraker, Excel's Dean of High School Placement and Graduate Services, 97 percent of the members of the Class of 2009 gained admission to some of the most selective college-preparatory independent, catholic, exam and pilot schools in the region.

"High school admission is a complex and competitive process and then there's a question of securing adequate financial aid and scholarship money," said Ms. Fraker. "The students' success in gaining admission to their best fit schools and winning the funding they need to attend them is a testament to the hard work of our students, teachers and families."

This fall, members of Excel Academy's Class of 2009 will attend college-prep schools that include Boston College High, Concord Academy, Newman Prep, Newton Country Day School, North Cambridge Catholic and The Rivers School, among others. And, for a class that lives to set new precedents, members of the Class of 2009 will be the first Excel Academy graduates to enroll at Boston Latin School, Governor's Academy, Lexington Christian Academy, Noble & Greenough School, St. Mark's School, The White Mountain School and Williston-Northampton School.

A NOTE FROM OUR LEADERS

Shortly after taking office, President Obama spoke to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and stated his belief that high-performing charter schools are key to closing the achievement gap in this country. He called for the expansion of such schools. Throughout this summer, many Massachusetts state policymakers have echoed the President's sentiments, proposing new legislation to lift the charter cap and unleash educational excellence.

The momentum for charter school expansion at the federal and state level is a result of schools, like Excel Academy, that are proving what is possible in urban education. Excel is closing the achievement gap by constantly reevaluating our standards, setting even more aggressive goals, and holding every member of our school community accountable for the achievement of those goals. And while driving high student achievement is our focal point, our teachers are also constantly striving to further our success in fostering individuals of strong character through expanded extracurricular, extension and character building opportunities.

As we begin the 2009-10 school year, we eagerly anticipate watching our current students and graduates grow as scholars, citizens and community leaders over the course of the year. Whether applying to rigorous college-preparatory high schools, taking on leadership roles here at Excel, or trying new activities in their classrooms, Excel Academy students are ready to show the impact that a quality education can have on themselves, their family, their community, and the world.

Rebecca Cass
Interim Executive Director

Komal Bhasin
Principal



Three fifth grade students take on challenging games at the Museum of Science. 21 Excel Academy students participated in Museum of Science summer programs on scholarship.

SUMMER WORKSHOPS SUPPORT EXCEL ACADEMY GRADUATES

Summer means more than just beaches and ice cream for the students and graduates of Excel Academy Charter School. Current students broadened their academic horizons by participating in summer programs at the Museum of Science and the STEM Program at MIT. Others challenged themselves to live away from home and try new recreational activities, like the 21 students who attended Camps Sangamon, Camp C-5 New England and Camp Med-O-Lark. Recent Excel Academy graduates prepared to enter high school by meeting with their mentors and conducting “practice commutes” in anticipation of their first day of school. Meanwhile, members of Excel’s first graduating class, now entering their senior year in high school, returned to the place where their college paths began by attending a series of college readiness workshops at Excel Academy, hosted by Laura Goldworm, Excel’s Graduate Services Manager.

The 2009-10 school year marks the first year in which Excel Academy graduates will apply to college. Recognizing that our graduates are at a critical junction on the road to higher education, Ms. Goldworm has developed an intensive college readiness and advisory curriculum. “What we’re hearing from graduates is that their high schools are assuming a base-level of knowledge about the college process that our students and their families lack. We believe it is our responsibility to fill that gap by providing our graduates and their families with access to college knowledge in a supportive and familiar, bilingual environment,” said Ms. Goldworm. In order to support our graduates in fulfilling their dreams of higher education, Ms. Goldworm hosted three student workshops over the summer which addressed such topics as essay brainstorming and writing and financial aid and scholarships.

“I feel more confident about applying to college because of the workshops and the guidance I’ve received from Ms. Goldworm,” said Julian Mongui, a member of Excel’s Class of 2006 and a senior at Boston College High School. “It’s nice to know that even though we graduated three years ago, Excel Academy still cares about us. All the teachers are still committed to getting us to college.”

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MA

Support Governor Patrick’s proposed raise of the charter school cap at an upcoming public hearing:

**Wednesday, September 17th at 1pm
Gardiner Auditorium of the State House.**

Charter school proponents are encouraged to attend and voice their opinions. For more information, please contact Betsy Diaz of the Boston Charter School Alliance at Betsy_Masscharterschools.org@comcast.net.

EIGHTH GRADE LEADERS PREP EXCEL’S NEW STUDENTS

Excel Academy is renowned for its rigorous academics, consistent systems and procedures and widespread culture of achievement. While Komal Bhasin, Excel’s Principal, drives the school’s academic program and Christopher Habetler, Dean of Students, supports classroom learning, Excel Academy student leaders play a big role in the transmission of Excel’s culture of intellectual curiosity and educational commitment. In planning and conducting New Student Orientation, Ms. Bhasin and Mr. Habetler are turning to returning eighth grade students to help teach their younger peers what it means to be an Excel Academy student.

Yahaira Acuna is one of 12 students serving as an Orientation Leader this year. Yahaira returned to Excel Academy in mid-August to participate in an Orientation Leader training session run by Mr. Habetler. “We reflected on why the school has high expectations, how they benefit us as students and how to communicate that to new Excel students. It’s a challenge, but I think it’s important that new students hear it from kids like me who can relate to what they’re experiencing,” Yahaira explained. Yahaira and the other Orientation Leaders look forward to helping the 54 new fifth grade students learn how to be Prepared, Respectful, Engaged and Professional.



OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

Friends of Excel Academy Charter School play a critical role in our success. Mentors provide insight and guidance to graduates as they transition to high school, visitors share their stories with students and inspire them to pursue their goals and supporters provide us with the resources necessary to offer students a top quality middle school education.

We want to thank you for your ongoing interest in our work and your continued commitment to changing our students’ life trajectories. We hope you will pay us a visit during the school year to see firsthand how you are having an impact!

For information about visiting Excel Academy or making a gift, please visit www.excelacademy.org or contact Audra Peek, Director of Resource Development at apeek@excelacademy.org.

Established in 2003, Excel Academy Charter School currently serves over 200 fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from East Boston, Chelsea and surrounding cities. The school’s mission is to prepare middle school students to succeed in high school and college, apply their learning to solve relevant problems and engage productively in their communities.

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