



Excel Academy students are treated to a tour of Harvard Business School by members of the Latin American Student Organization and former Excel Academy Principal Scott Given.

EXCEL STUDENTS EXPLORE ISSUES OF GOVERNANCE

To supplement our rigorous academic program, Excel Academy Charter School uses our enrichment programs to foster students' curiosity and creativity. While activities like ice skating and martial arts expand students' athletic abilities, our student groups and field trip opportunities enhance students' intellectual experiences. This winter, Excel Academy students who participated in Model United Nations and a trip to Harvard Business School developed their understandings of international and corporate governance.

The founding members of Excel Academy's Model UN team, like all Excel Academy students, are motivated by rigor. So when they were presented with the challenge of representing the country of Zimbabwe, looking into its role in current global issues and learning about its governance, they dove enthusiastically into their research. Working with Excel's seventh and eighth grade Social Studies teacher, Caitlin Moore, the students prepared papers, speeches and resolutions. On Saturday, December 6th, the team traveled to Roxbury Preparatory School for their first Model UN conference.

"I was nervous at first, but then I was excited to speak in front of the group about Zimbabwe and to debate a bunch of interesting topics," reflected Juan, an eighth grade Model UN member. "It was difficult to think through possible solutions that would benefit all of the countries, but that's what it is like for actual United Nations representatives, so I enjoyed the challenge."

While students learned about international governance at the Model UN conference, another group of students explored concepts of corporate governance over at Harvard Business School. At the invitation of the Latin American Student Organization (LASO) and former Excel Academy Principal, Scott Given, nine Excel students learned firsthand about life as a business school student. They prepared a case about the world famous elBulli restaurant, discussed the case with their LASO hosts, attended a class and toured the grounds. Excel students were not the only guests in the marketing class, as elBulli's celebrity chef, Ferran Adrià, was also in attendance, answering students' questions about his personal motivation and corporate marketing tactics.

"My favorite part was when Ferran Adrià came out and responded to all of the comments students had made about his marketing decisions. Students used the case to make inferences about his intentions, and then they got to find out whether their assumptions were correct," said seventh grader Andres Gallego. "That's a really cool way to learn about running a business." Eighth grade student Fatima Contreras agreed: "Harvard Business School classes are difficult, but the students learn a lot. My classes at Excel are very similar in that way, even though they don't teach about business issues. But I know that what they do teach will prepare me to be a successful business executive in the future if that's what I decide to do."

A NOTE FROM OUR LEADERS

On January 20, 2009, the students of Excel Academy Charter School gathered in Community Circle to listen to the inaugural speech of President Barack Obama. "In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned," he said. "Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the fainthearted -- for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things... who have carried us up the long, rugged path toward prosperity and freedom."

Hard work, no excuses and urgency has long characterized Excel Academy's underlying philosophy. As our students reflected on President Obama's speech, they made these connections between his speech and our school community. At Excel, we stress the importance of pursuing excellence, taking responsibility and embracing ones' capacity to be an academic "risk-taking, mistake-making machine." We tell the girls on our Step Team that proficiency is great, but practicing to increase precision will bring greatness. We encourage the boys in our Young Men's Leadership Group to be accountable for their actions and to go further and model strong choices for others.

When our students hear these messages, they respond. They think beyond themselves and work to do what is best for their community. They organize toy drives, like fifth grader Jaelinn Goodwin, who collected over 150 gifts for Toys for Tots this December. They encourage their peers, like Class of 2008 alumna, Alejandra Gil, who spends three hours each week helping younger students master math concepts during Excel's Saturday Academy program. Excel Academy students live our mission because they are committed to achieving greatness and dedicated to our journey toward higher education. They are risk-takers, doers, and makers of things, who will no doubt drive our school's and our society's future success.

Thank you for your support of Excel Academy.

Ann Waterman Roy
Executive Director

Komal Bhasin
Principal



Eighth grade risk-takers prepare for the annual ice cream eating competition as part of the Eighth Grade Olympics.

**STUDENT FEATURE:
IMAGINATION IS OUR DESTINATION
BY, KARLMICHAEL CAMASO
EXCEL CLASS OF 2010**

What do wooden dowels, hair bands, fishing wire and a fancy hat have in common? They are all included in an object my Destination Imagination (DI) team is building for our regional competition. Our challenge is to make our creation move without batteries or electricity and next month we will present it to a panel of judges. DI is a little bit of science, a little bit of math, a little bit of art and a whole lot of fun.



Karl Michael and Destination Imagination team members brainstorm solutions to an artistic challenge.

Destination Imagination is a non-profit organization that fosters the development of creativity. This is only my second month on the DI team, but the group has already had a massive impact on me. At the start of every week, some students think 'I hate Mondays' and go into school with a negative mindset. When I wake up on Monday I know that DI is just around the corner and I go to school with a smile on my face.

Our DI team knows that the most creative approach to a problem usually results in the best solution, so we think outside the box and take risks. We work hard to listen to each other and agree on the best ideas, and when an idea doesn't work, we still support each other. Every practice holds a new challenge and every competition probably will too. We know that if we work well together we will be ready to take on every challenge and we will be proud of our solution.

**STUDENT FEATURE:
HOOK, LINE, LAWYER
BY, LAURA RODRIGUEZ
EXCEL CLASS OF 2011**

"Have you ever played a violent video game? After playing that videogame, have you ever gone out and committed an act of violence?" These were the words I used as my opening hook to start my last argument during my Debate enrichment. Debate is a really important part of my life at Excel Academy. It helps me prepare for my future because I want to be a lawyer. As a lawyer, I will need to be able to take notes, research, use a hook, set up an argument, come up with evidence and explain my reasoning. In debate I am learning how to do all of these things. It also helps me to practice having good sportsmanship and being a good teammate.



Laura Rodriguez stands ready to deliver her argument as a member of the Excel Academy Debate Team.

Later this year, the debate team will travel to its first competition and I am excited to have that experience. As Excel students, we are doing everything we can to make sure we arrive at the competition prepared to do our best, respectful of our opponents, engaged with the topic and professional in how we make our argument. I know that if I can be PREP at the competition and later in life in the courtroom, I will succeed.

SAVE THE DATE

Excel Academy's Third Annual
Celebration of Excellence
Tuesday, June 2nd
Museum of Science
Cocktails and reception @ 6:30 pm
Dinner and program @ 7:30 pm
Invitations forthcoming.

OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

It is cold outside, but everyone inside Excel Academy Charter School is warmed by the spirit of academic rigor that radiates in our classrooms. Each and every day our students are discovering the joy of learning as they investigate new academic concepts and future opportunities. It is because of the financial contributions, volunteer efforts and ongoing encouragement provided by our community of supporters that we are able to offer students a high quality, college-preparatory education and the experiences that inspire them to set and achieve ambitious goals.

All of us at Excel Academy thank you for your ongoing commitment to our students' futures. We hope you will join us on one of our upcoming Take a Supporter to School days, or for a visit on a date of your choosing. Through conversations with students, observations of classes and meetings with staff, you will see firsthand how your involvement is making a difference:

Take a Supporter to School Day
Thursday, February 26th or March 12th
7:15-8:30am (formal program)
8:30-noon (optional program:
observe classes, talk to teachers, enjoy lunch
with your student host)

To RSVP or to schedule an individual visit, please email apeek@excelacademy.org and indicate your profession, hobbies and/or areas of interest. Based on the information you provide, you will be matched with a student host who will contact you about your upcoming school day.

If you are interested in making a gift to the Excel Academy Annual Fund, please visit www.excelacademy.org or mail your gift to Friends of Excel Academy, P.O. Box 285268, East Boston, MA 02228.

Thank you for all that you do to help us fulfill our critical college-preparatory mission!

Established in 2003, Excel Academy Charter School currently serves 209 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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