



**EXCEL**  
ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS



**EXCEL**  
ACADEMY CHARTER  
HIGH SCHOOL

# SUCCESS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018



A young woman with brown hair in a ponytail, secured with a purple bow, is shown in profile. She is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and has her right hand raised. In the background, other students in similar attire are also raising their hands in a classroom setting. The background is slightly blurred, showing educational posters on the wall.

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

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- |          |                        |           |                     |
|----------|------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Welcome Letter         | <b>8</b>  | Extra-curriculars   |
| <b>2</b> | School Overview        | <b>10</b> | CAPS                |
| <b>4</b> | First Graduating Class | <b>11</b> | Alumni Highlight    |
| <b>6</b> | Student Profiles       | <b>12</b> | Support our Mission |
| <b>7</b> | Academic Performance   |           |                     |



**Dear Friend,**

This June, for the first time, Excel students will graduate from Excel Academy Charter High School. This moment is over 10 years in the making and is the product of diligent planning and execution from an incredible group of individuals. Strong leadership across our network and the sustained success of our middle schools, tremendous generosity from donors who have contributed over \$15M to building a brand-new school, and the persistence of our students - most of whom have spent 8 years and over 700,000 minutes at Excel - have made this possible.

This annual report is intended to provide some texture below the headline, to introduce you to some of our students who will graduate this June, and to highlight a student who graduated years ago and is “paying it forward” both as an Excel teacher and a member of the Chelsea School Committee. It also provides an overview of our academic and extra-curricular programs, reflecting our strong belief that high expectations, a high level of support, and the opportunity to explore interests outside of the classroom are vital ingredients for student success.

We also want to proudly share the work of our College Access and Post-Secondary Success (CAPS) team, which has played a vital role in both our students’ success after Excel and serving as a feedback loop for Excel to really understand how our students do in college and beyond. And of course, we’d like you to know that Excel is financially sustainable.

This journey for Excel and our students would not have been possible without your support. Thank you for making these stories possible.

Sincerely,

**Owen Stearns**  
CEO

**Ben Howe**  
Board Chair





## Network of highest performing charter public schools serving grades 5-12.

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Excel Academy currently serves over 1,300 students from the communities of East Boston and Chelsea.

Founded in 2003 to provide a high-quality college preparatory education for the students of East Boston and Chelsea, Excel is proving that a child's ability to succeed in high school, college, and beyond is not determined by their zip code. We have grown from one school serving approximately 200 students to a network of four schools serving over 1,300 students, and our purpose and theory of change remains consistent: we believe that when a student has the support and tools to pursue a productive post-secondary pathway that aligns with their own personal identity and values, they can fundamentally change their life trajectory.

# 81%

81% OF OUR STUDENTS  
ARE LOW-INCOME



# 87%

87% OF OUR STUDENTS  
ARE LATINX OR  
AFRICAN-AMERICAN



# 63%

63% OF OUR STUDENTS  
SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER  
THAN ENGLISH AT HOME



# 20%

20% OF OUR STUDENTS  
ARE CLASSIFIED  
AS STUDENTS WITH  
DISABILITIES



# 84%

84% OF OUR STUDENTS  
WILL BE FIRST-GENERATION  
COLLEGE STUDENTS





JOIN US IN  
CONGRATULATING  
THE SOON-TO-BE  
**CLASS OF**  
2019!

# Excel Academy Charter High School is about to graduate its first-ever 12th grade.



# 4

AS LIKELY TO GRADUATE  
FROM COLLEGE AS A STUDENT  
ATTENDING A COMPARATIVE  
DISTRICT SCHOOL

Just as we teach our students to work hard, take chances, learn from their mistakes, and celebrate their achievements, we too follow that same path. After 8 years of operating a small single-site middle school in East Boston, Excel was designated a “Proven Provider” by the Commonwealth and granted two additional charters to serve middle school students. After four more successful years, Excel Academy Charter High School opened.

This June, we will graduate our first class of high school seniors, who have shown tremendous leadership in creating a culture where it is cool to be smart, an athlete, an artist, or anything in between. Students give each other support and space to explore who they are and what motivates them, and they have worked together to win athletic championships in everything from dance to flag football.

Now they are figuring out their next step - for most that will be college, with the application process well underway. During this process, they will be supported by our College Access & Post-Secondary Success team - **because they will have graduated from Excel, these students are projected to be four times as likely to graduate from college as a student attending a comparative district school.**





## JOVAN'S JOURNEY TO BELIEVE IN HIMSELF



**Jovan entered 5th grade at Excel struggling to focus and apply himself in the classroom. Over the last 7 years, he has become a class leader, varsity athlete, and finalist for the prestigious POSSE Scholarship at Union College.**



” At Excel, it is clear that school is the number one priority. In middle school, I definitely had issues focusing in class. I was easily distracted, but I had a lot of teachers, like Mr. Phillips, who told me that I have great potential and that I need to recognize it in myself. Junior year was the most academically rigorous year of my life. I applied to the prestigious CURE program through Dana Farber and ended up interviewing and being offered a spot there as a researcher for the summer.

During high school, I have taken advantage of all the summer opportunities that the CAPS team has put in front of me. All of these experiences helped me learn that life is bigger than Excel and there is this whole world outside of Boston. ”

**The CURE program introduces Massachusetts high school and college students from underrepresented populations to the world of cancer research by placing them in real research settings at local cancer research institutions.**

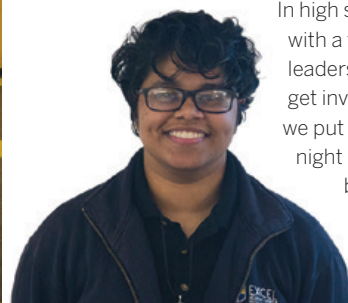


## SUPPORTIVE TEACHERS HELP KAY EMBRACE RISKS



**Kay developed into a vocal leader at Excel, including being a founder of the Pride Association of Excel.**

” Originally, I didn't want to go to high school at Excel. It was a new, unproven high school. There were no older students, there was no track record, and I had been accepted into Boston Latin. Through talking with my mom and Ms. Stuntz, who had been influential throughout my entire middle school experience as my debate coach, I began to view this new opportunity as exciting.



In high school, I started the Pride Association with a focus on helping members grow as leaders, contribute to the community, and get involved in their communities. Recently, we put on our first big school-wide event the night before Halloween which was attended by over 150 students.

Adjusting to the workload of AP courses was very challenging. It kicked our butts, but teachers have been so supportive in helping me through. Spanish was the first class that I had to work harder than ever before. But Ms. Figueroa worked with me to get through it and helped me figure out ways to apply Spanish to other areas of life, school, and work.

I have always enjoyed helping other students in math and science, and I plan to study health sciences or biology in college. After college, I want to get into the rehab fields: occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, or physical therapy. I want to see the progress of patients, which is why the rehab field is so attractive. ”





## Excel had more LatinX 8th graders score at the highest level on the 2017 Math MCAS 2.0 than all of BPS.

## Strong, Results-based Academics

Excel has consistently been among the highest performing schools in the state for more than a decade.

Our academic program meets the needs of our students and helps them achieve at the highest level by focusing on developing critical, analytic thinking and expression as well as emotional development. Once a week, high school students participate in an activity called Circle. Circle is a process which nurtures personal, relational, and community growth through the sharing of and reflecting on individual experiences. Our teachers and staff provide high-quality instruction and support; they are talented, committed individuals dedicated to their personal and collective advancement. Classrooms are focused on fostering academic conversation to maintain a high degree of student cognitive lift in class. **The result: flexible thinkers who can solve complex problems that arise in a complex world.**

Our students work hard to achieve success in school and in life.

- We are offering **17 AP courses** this year, and 99% of our current senior class is enrolled in at least one AP class.
- **Excel's attrition rate of 6%** was significantly lower than the 9% average for all Boston public schools last year.
- Last year, Excel Academy Charter High School students' pass rate exceeded the national average on 5 of 7 AP tests, including **100% pass rate in U.S. History**. These high AP scores are all the more impressive given the broad range of students enrolled in advanced coursework.
- Excel's mean score across all AP courses offered at the high school last year was **25% higher than the national average** and 15% higher than the Massachusetts average.



## **Excel Academy provides a variety of ways through which students can explore their interests.**

It is our duty to provide enriching extra curricular activities that pique all interests across our diverse student body.

At Excel, students and teachers share experiences together - inside and outside of the classroom. On Friday afternoons, students and teachers from our three middle schools participate in activities that stimulate their combined interests. Ice skating, dodgeball, music, yoga, debate, snowboarding, and cooking are just a few examples. Learning through experience is an integral part of our program - middle school students travel to New York City to participate in Model UN and our environmental adventures group travels to the White Mountains seeking to learn and adapt to a very different environment. After completing a vigorous application and interview process, middle school students admitted to the honors council have a serious responsibility. They are tasked with upholding the integrity of the school and holding their fellow classmates accountable for their actions. Honors council students are a sounding board for both faculty and students alike when reviewing school discipline cases and other essential parts of ongoing operations.







# 27

## DIFFERENT CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS

As students grow and change so do their interests. When they get to the high school they can launch and run clubs on their own with the support of a faculty member. Clubs at Excel Academy Charter High School enrich and deepen student connections within our vibrant community. Some students are passionate about business or events and get the opportunity to explore those interests outside of school. Our Prom Committee is in the process of planning senior prom on their own with little help from faculty. They interviewed venues, set up a cost benefit analysis, and worked hard to find an equitable solution for students of all backgrounds with differing financial constraints.

Finding a high school where it is normal for a group of young men to engage with their teachers in vulnerable and emotional ways is uncommon. At Excel you can witness this at one of our Band of Brothers meetings, where a group of young men and faculty reflect on who they are and who they want to be. Young men take time to explore pieces of their identities, whether through group discussion or physical activity. Over the summer, Band of Brothers traveled to Utah to explore the world outside of East Boston and Chelsea, spending two weeks camping, hiking, and learning how to adapt in a very different part of the world. Recently, the group held a Boot Camp for all prospective 9th and 10th grade members to further develop relationships with peers and staff and to challenge themselves physically and mentally.

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**Clubs at Excel get involved with the larger community and are the backbone of our vibrant community.**



# It is our job to ensure success for our students in high school, college, and beyond.



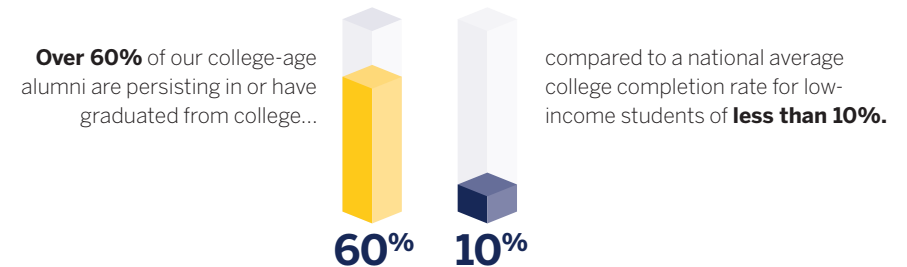
Our dedicated CAPS team provides personalized support to help alumni earn their college degree or fulfill other post-secondary endeavors.

To ensure that Excel students achieve their potential and are able to attend and succeed in college, our CAPS curriculum starts in fifth grade and goes through and beyond high school graduation. Our program is based on the belief that student-driven goals are at the heart of post-secondary success. To that end, we guide students to align their interests with opportunities starting the very first day that they enter our doors. This includes supporting the ~10% of students who don't choose college to find other productive post-secondary pathways.

And, we do strongly believe that college is the best choice for the vast majority of our students. Nationally, only 8% of children from low-income families go on to earn a college degree. At Excel we are challenging that statistic one student at a time. Our students face obstacles beyond test scores and GPAs. In partnership with families, CAPS works closely with each Excel alum so that those obstacles don't define their path. As a result, our students are close to four times more likely to graduate from college than their peers at comparative district schools.



## COLLEGE COMPLETION RATE



# 100%

100% OF OUR STUDENTS WILL PARTICIPATE IN COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMMING BEGINNING IN 5TH GRADE



87% of middle school graduates from the classes of 2010-2014 **matriculated into a two or four year school or entered the military**

# 93% 100%

Last year, 93% of Excel alum matriculated into college

100% of kids who graduated high school are pursuing a productive post-secondary plan (7% in trade or vocational programs)



# Alumni Highlight



**Kelly Garcia, '07, Learning Specialist**

Kelly graduated from Holy Cross, is currently the first Latina to be elected as Vice-Chair of the Chelsea School Committee, and currently works as a Special Education Teacher at Excel Academy Charter High School.

” Because of Excel, I am where I am today. The support I received while I was a student was incredible, but what was even more amazing was the support that I received after I left Excel. The CAPS team – Yinnette, CeSea, Laura, and Nicole would reach out while I was at Holy Cross to make sure things were going well. CeSea and Yinnette visited in person and would provide insightful words and goodie bags with snacks.

After graduating, I joined Teach for America, and I currently work as a Special Education teacher at Excel Academy, serve as Vice-Chair on the Chelsea School Committee, and continue to advocate for Latinos and other marginalized communities. Most recently, I was added to El Mundo’s 30 under 30 list for my work in the communities of East Boston and Chelsea. ”



# Help us create more stories like this.

Along with our dedicated school leaders, classroom teachers, and support staff, the seven full-time team members of CAPS prepare our students for success in their respective productive post-secondary pathways, whether that be a four year college or an alternative path. To ensure that future classes of Excel graduates receive this crucial support after they leave our program, it is imperative that we continue to generate support for this extraordinary programming.

Our goal is to raise funding privately to pay for the extraordinary work of the CAPS team, so that our students have critical support as they pursue their post-secondary pathways.

## 2017-2018 Financial Highlights

	Jul '17 – Jun '18
<b>Operating Revenue</b>	
Per-Pupil Tuition	\$ 16,675,863
In-Kind Pension	2,800,371
Government Grants	1,792,053
Program Fees and Other Income	846,438
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 22,114,725</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	
Personnel - Salaries & Benefits	\$ 15,229,167
Direct Student Costs	2,644,496
Facility Expenses	2,585,571
Other Operating Costs	1,207,136
Depreciation	954,055
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 22,620,425</b>
<b>Net Position Before Ext. Pgrm.</b>	<b>\$ (505,700)</b>
<b>Extraordinary Programming</b>	
CAPS	\$ 656,734
<b>Net Position After Ext. Pgrm.</b>	<b>\$ (1,162,434)</b>
<b>General Revenue</b>	
Interest Income	\$ 352,547
Grants & Other Income	1,402,569
<b>Total General Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 1,755,116</b>
<b>Net Income / (Loss)</b>	<b>\$ 592,682</b>



**Thank you to everyone  
 who helped make this  
 story possible. We  
 would not be where  
 we are today without  
 your support.**

**If you are interested in learning more about our schools or  
 visiting, please email Jake Foy at [jfoy@excelacademy.org](mailto:jfoy@excelacademy.org)**

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The mission of Excel Academy is to prepare 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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[www.excelacademy.org](http://www.excelacademy.org)