



PRESS RELEASE



City Charter High School Wins National Award One of the Top Performing Charter Schools in the Country

Two Local Charter Schools Put Pittsburgh on the Map

PITTSBURGH, March 5, 2009 – City Charter High School and Propel McKEESPORT have been identified as two of the twenty-one top performing charter schools in the country. Both schools have received Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) awards from New Leaders for New Schools, recognizing outstanding student achievement on 2007-2008 state tests. City Charter High School is a technology infused public school serving approximately 520 students in grades 9-12. Propel McKEESPORT is one of Propel's five local charter schools serving a total of 1500 students in grades K-12. Propel McKEESPORT serves approximately 350 students in grades K-7.

EPIC was established in 2006 to link principal and teacher incentive pay to the wide-scale sharing of effective educational practices. The program identifies school leaders and instructional staff driving student achievement gains, and then awards these educators in exchange for sharing the practices that have helped lead to the gains. EPIC is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), charter school partners and private philanthropic funders.

"The fact that two of the country's top twenty-one charter schools are right here in Pittsburgh says a lot about the strength of the charter school movement in this region," said Jeremy Resnick, Executive Director, Propel Schools.

The mission of City Charter High School is to graduate students who are academically, technologically, personally, and socially prepared to succeed in post-secondary education or training. Using a team approach, City High cultivates a safe, supportive and academically rigorous environment by recognizing the nurturing individual talents, needs and skills.

81% of City High's students are from the Pittsburgh School district; the rest are from 23 area school districts. The majority of the students previously attended their assigned neighborhood public schools; remaining students attended other charter schools, magnets, parochial schools, private schools or were home schooled. City High has recently been featured on Good Morning America for its record of success and innovation and the fact that 85% of graduates go on to attend 2 or 4 year colleges has been recognized by US News and World Report.

"We are proud to be recognized on a national level for our work in public education," said City High Founder and CEO Richard Wertheimer. "Our school is committed to excellence and the EPIC award is a great platform to empower us to share our success with others."





The mission of Propel Schools is to catalyze the transformation of public education in Southwestern Pennsylvania so that all children have access to high performing public schools. This mission is pursued by opening and operating high performance schools of choice in educationally underserved communities on the belief that establishing a competitive dynamic in public education is the best way to provide the region's public schools with sustained incentives for the hard work of continuous self improvement.

Propel McKEESPORT has recently celebrated some of the highest levels of student achievement in the region. On last year's state tests, the 5th grade class was 98% proficient in math, students in grades 3-6 were 82% proficient in math, and overall, 60% of students were advanced in math. Over 85% of students who attend Propel McKEESPORT are eligible for free/reduced lunch, 73% are a minority and 17% have special needs.

"Propel McKeesport has been the highest performing, high poverty school in Allegheny County for over two years now," said Tina Chekan, Principal, Propel McKEESPORT. "We do not accept the premise that poverty or family structure determines education performance or life outcome. Receiving this EPIC award is a testament to that premise. We are extremely proud."

Both City High and Propel are committed to innovation in education and widely attribute this innovation to their success. An extended school day and school year, professional development opportunities for staff, close relationships with students, career exploration, and a commitment to sharing best practices, are just a few of the elements that make these schools a success.

"The critical component for EPIC is to identify effective practices that positively impact student achievement," said Dianne Houghton, Chief Community Resources Officer of New Leaders for New Schools. "What we've learned thus far is that effective schools can and do have a dramatic impact on student achievement no matter their students' backgrounds or prior schooling."

EPIC operates in the following school districts and partner schools: District of Columbia Public Schools, Memphis City Schools, the National Charter School Consortium, and Denver Public Schools. EPIC awards and the EPIC effective practice process were piloted in schools across the country in the 2007-08 school year. To date, EPIC has given over \$4.3 million in financial awards to more than 1700 educators in 69 schools nationwide.

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