

New cadre of high-performing charters emerging in Minnesota

Charter School Partners announces it's first "Closing the Gap" school list: Top 8 of 10 schools are charters

Minneapolis, MN . July 21, 2010. Charter School Partners today announced its first annual **Closing the Gap** schools list in which eight out of ten of the highest performing public schools in the state serving the neediest children in poverty are charter schools.

"The early results from the 2010 MCA-II scores are in and the headline clearly is this: while the 2010 test scores for Minneapolis and St. Paul were disappointingly flat from 2009, numerous charter schools showed solid and impressive gains in closing Minnesota's achievement gap," said Al Fan, Executive Director of Charter School Partners. "These results show great hope that a cadre of high-achieving charter schools are emerging in Minnesota focused on closing the achievement gap. We are developing a new Community of Excellence focused around charter schools".

"Although we are a charter support organization," said Fan, "we did not include any subjective or qualitative criteria to skew our list. We are simply looking at the raw numbers in Reading and Math in the state proficiency scores. When we do this, a story emerges and it is this: the highest performing public schools serving a high population of at-risk students are charter schools."

Unlike other reports, most notable the July 1, 2010 *Star Tribune*, where seven out of ten *Beating the Odds* and *Biggest Gains* schools were charter schools, CSP used slightly different criteria by incorporating both Math and Reading scores to determine the rankings, versus one or the other. "By using both Math and Reading scores, a broader profile emerges", said Fan.

Fan, noting that 'high growth' scores for schools are actually a more important criteria than simply reporting proficiency scores, said that "there are clear reasons why these schools have shown impressive growth gains from 2009 to 2010." Fan continued: "virtually all of the **Closing the Gap** schools growth gains are in the double digits, which is really remarkable."

In addition to the test scores themselves, Fan said that he and his Charter School Partners team have been in and observed many of the individual schools and said that "there is a reason these schools are succeeding. Each of them have begun to implement national best practices including utilizing intense data-driven decision-making products and focusing on improving teacher quality. Most importantly, said Fan, each of these schools have incredibly strong leaders that instill a highly rigorous, whatever it takes, no-excuses culture that sets a high bar for students and teachers."

Charter School Partners 2010 CLOSING THE GAP* Schools

Charter School Partners	<i>Closing the Gap</i> * Schools			
SCHOOL	MATH	READING	% in Poverty	
1. Tarek Ibn Ziyad Academy (TIZA), IGH	93	67	89%	charter
2. Global Academy, Columbia Heights	88	66	94%	charter
3. Concordia Creating Learning Academy, SP	68	77	85%	charter
4. Cedar Riverside, Minneapolis	76	69	97%	charter
5. Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus, St. Paul	75	69	91%	district
6. Hiawatha Leadership Academy, Minneapolis	70	68	91%	charter
7. Rochester Math and Science, Rochester	67	63	91%	charter
8. Valley View Elementary, Columbia Heights	66	64	95%	district
9. Higher Ground, St. Paul	64	65	96%	charter
10. Harvest Prep, Minneapolis	62	62	85%	charter

* This chart shows the top ten highest proficiency schools serving a population of at least 85% poverty. Data taken from Minnesota Department of Education for MCA-II tests from Spring 2010.

Injecting a note of caution, Fan stated that “although these are good scores, they are not yet great scores. National ***Closing the Gap*** schools are consistently scoring in the high 80’s in test scores. Reflecting this concern, Mary Donaldson, Principal of the third highest scoring gap-closing school, St. Paul’s Concordia Creative Learning Academy, said “we improved but we are not where we need to be”.

Charter School Partners is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase the number of high performing charters in Minnesota and increase the number of at-risk students being served by high performing charters schools.

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