

Yonkers Charter School Is Making the Grade

Improved Test Scores Are Proof of Positive Learning Effects

By Liz Ehrlich

Since its inception in 2005, the Yonkers' Charter School of Educational Excellence (CSEE) has proven itself capable of living up to at least two of its objectives; that is, to improve student learning and achievement and to increase learning opportunities for all students.

The CSEE, located at 260 Warburton Ave., is the first public charter school to be approved in Westchester County and the first in the Yonkers City School District. It offers extended-day art, music and foreign language programs and seeks to successfully educate students in grades K-6.

Recently, the CSEE announced that the school's enrollment has more than doubled since it opened



Catalina Castillo

its doors, and now caters to 365 students. On average, school enrollment has grown by 30 percent each year, a number that CSEE Principal Catalina Castillo attributes to the charter's "doing something right."

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"We are very comfortable with the amount of students enrolled this year. [The increased enrollment] shows the accomplishments of our students," Castillo said.

It is safe to assume that the CSEE's growing student body is, in part, a result of the positive effects the school has already had on its students, the proof of which can be found in the increased number of students who have passed the New York State Assessment Tests in mathematics and English language arts.

Overall, the fourth grade has seen the biggest improvement, with 82.5 percent of its students passing the New York State Assessment in

mathematics and 75 percent passing in English language arts.

Additionally, the fourth grade boasts the largest number of students who passed the English test in the entire school. Third-graders have had similar success in the mathematics category, with 84.4 percent of its students passing the test, earning the distinction as having the most students in a grade passing the assessment in math.

"I attribute this tremendous growth to the dedication of teachers and training professionals, who with their concentrated efforts, helped close the gap," Castillo said.

The School of Educational Excellence is managed, in part, by Victory Schools, one of the nation's most successful operators of public charter schools, which has worked with the CSEE to establish its suc-

cessful design, curriculum and instruction program.

Recently, Victory Schools appointed Dr. Robert A. Lewis as its new regional director, a part of Victory's expansion to service a growing number of charter schools in the tri-state region.

"I am thrilled to be working with Victory Schools and am looking forward to managing the schools to reach world-class status," Lewis stated.

By definition, charter schools are legally independent, innovative, outcome-based public schools whose applicants take place in a lottery-driven selection process.

For more information regarding the CSEE or Victory Schools, call the CSEE at 914-476-5070 or visit www.victoryschools.com.

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