

The 2009 Laurie Rene Brown Memorial Prize



CSEE Sixth Grade Teacher & Principal Win the Distinguished Second Annual Laurie R. Brown Memorial Award

NEW YORK, June 15, 2009 – Margaret O’Donnell, a sixth grade teacher at the Charter School of Educational Excellence (CSEE), has been awarded the second annual Laurie Brown Memorial Prize. Currently in her second year at CSEE, Ms. O’Donnell’s approach to teaching has led to remarkable student achievement. On the 2009 New York State ELA exam, 100% of Ms. O’Donnell’s students performed at a proficient level, a 50 percent point improvement from the previous year when those students took the exam as fifth graders. On the 2009 State math exam, 95% of Ms. O’Donnell’s students performed at a proficient level, a 37 percent point improvement from the previous year.

“Ms. O’Donnell has earned the respect of her students and the school’s staff with her demanding, but compassionate approach to education,” said Dr. Robert Lewis, Victory Schools’ Regional Director to CSEE. “The results Ms. O’Donnell’s class achieved on their year’s State exams speaks to her belief that, regardless of their background, all children can perform at the highest level.”

Laurie Rene Brown joined Victory Schools’ founder, Steve Klinsky, as the organization’s first professional educator in the winter of 1999. From then until her untimely passing in 2008, Ms. Brown dedicated her career to establishing Victory as the successful education management organization it is today. Prior to joining Victory, Ms. Brown served as a Core Knowledge instructional specialist and an early childhood teacher trainer in New York City and as a Modern Red Schoolhouse professional developer for the Hudson Institute. Ms. Brown began her education career as an early childhood classroom teacher in the Bronx.

This year’s Prize finalists, Catalina Castillo, CSEE’s principal, and Marvin Griffin, Peninsula Preparatory Academy Charter Schools’ Interim principal. Ms. O’Donnell, Ms. Castillo, and Mr. Griffin have all exemplified Ms. Brown’s spirit, passion, and commitment to improving the education of the children they serve.

About the Laurie R. Brown Memorial Prize

The Laurie Brown Memorial Prize is awarded annually to the Victory Schools teacher, principal, or administrative professional whose efforts mostly embody Laurie’s passion, warmth, dedication to children and a shining spirit. Any adult staff member in a Victory-managed school or at Victory headquarters may be nominated for this award. The Prize recipient is selected by a panel of Laurie’s colleagues. The members of the Prize Committee review submission in May and announce a winner in June. The Prize Recipient and Finalists receive cash prizes.

