



# EXCEL ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

2501 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AVE, SE, WASHINGTON, DC 20020 • (202) 373-0097 • EXCELPCS.ORG • FALL 2010

## Welcome Back and A Message From Our Principal

**D**EAR PARENTS/GUARDIANS,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Excel Academy for the 2010-2011 school year. Having been with Excel since the founding year, I have watched many of our returning scholars grow and mature over the past two years. In the world of education, there is nothing more gratifying than observing the transformation that takes place in a child as her mind is filled with new information and challenged to solve problems.

This year, Excel has developed a dynamic team of educators, committed to going above and beyond to ensure academic success for all scholars. With a total enrollment of 328 scholars, the faculty and staff are relentless about maintaining high expectations through targeted small group instruction, behavioral support, character education, and increased parental involvement. To provide increased support and coaching to teachers, Excel has hired two Academy Directors. Mr. Derrick Henderson, Early Childhood Academy Director, will focus on supporting the Preschool and Pre-K teaching teams, while Ms. Meghan Dillon, Early Elementary Academy Director, will support the Kindergarten – 2nd grade teaching teams.

Our theme for this year is, *Growing Together...One Mission, One School*. As we embark upon year three, we understand the importance of the Excel Community working towards a shared mission and vision. It is with the continued support of our parents and families we will be able to ensure a successful year for our scholars.

Thank you for your commitment to and investment in your scholar's future.

Sincerely,  
Lela Johnson  
Principal



## A Great Start to a New School Year

Excel has grown since last school year. We are now providing high quality single-sex education to 328 students in Preschool through 2nd grade. We have added two Pre-K classrooms, one first grade classroom, and two new second grade classrooms. We have hired a full-time music teacher to add to the specials offered our students.

### Our first Saturday Academy was a Slam Dunk!

Chasity Melvin, of the Washington Mystics, came to Excel Academy as part of the Athletes for Hope 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance campaign. Ms. Melvin spent the morning with Excel Academy scholars teaching them about the value of hard work and following their dreams. She provided Excel's kindergarten through 2nd grade students with a few basketball pointers and coached them in small group basketball clinics. The students had a wonderful time dribbling, passing, and shooting basketballs. Ms. Melvin helped some of our younger scholars feel the rush of a slam dunk by providing them with a little extra boost.



Scholars practice dribbling with WNBA star Chasity Melvin.

### Our second Saturday Academy was...GOAL-DEN!



First graders pose for a "team" photo with professional soccer player, Melissa Abegg.

Melissa Abegg, of the Washington Freedom, came to Excel Academy on Saturday as part of our partnership with Athletes for Hope. Ms. Abegg brought her experience as a professional athlete and her passion for coaching children to the field. Kindergarten through 2nd grade students warmed up and then practiced dribbling soccer balls, stopping the soccer ball, and passing. Students had a fantastic time running outside on the field and learning from Ms. Abegg.

## After School Enrichment

Excel provides learning and fun during regular school hours AND through our various after school activities. Excel students can participate in the Girls Scouts of America (Wednesdays & Fridays), Dance (Tuesdays & Thursdays), and soccer with DC United (Mondays). Students enrolled in Excel's After School program have been busy making scarecrows, candy apples, and decorating pumpkins.



Scholars head out to the field with their DC United soccer coach

## Safety City Field Trip

Preschool and Pre-K scholars took their first field trip of the year to Safety City in Baltimore, MD. Safety City is a miniature version of Baltimore used to teach children about traffic safety in a realistic, fun and safe setting. The scholars had a great time learning about ways to cross the street, identifying different environmental print (recognizing a traffic sign before you can read), and learning new songs/chants on ways to be safe. The scholars spent an hour at Safety City and had an opportunity to play at one of the "best" playgrounds in Baltimore located in Druid Hill Park.



PS & PK students learn to be safe while navigating miniature city streets

## Cox Farm Field Trip

Kindergarten through 2nd grade students visited Cox Farms in Centerville, VA at the end of October. Scholars had been learning about non-living and living things, different communities (rural, suburban, urban), and life cycles. The field trip to Cox Farm reinforced the lessons scholars were learning in class and was also a whole heap of fun. Cox Farms Fall Festival includes fun activities like hayrides, giant slides, farm animals and their babies, a cornfield maze, straw tunnels, pumpkin picking, and hot apple cider.



Hay! PS & PK scholars at Butler's Orchard

## Butler's Orchard Field Trip

Preschool and Pre-k scholars visited Butler's Orchard in Germantown, MD. Scholars spent the day picking pumpkins and playing in the hay. Bulter's Orchard offered our scholars a chance to see the country-side, play in the dirt and hay, and expand their understanding of the natural environment. Their activities reinforced the lessons the scholars had in fall and the four seasons, pumpkins, apples, and things that grow.



K - 2nd scholars at Cox Farm



**Bounce Around acrobat shows scholars what is possible when you're fit.**

## Bounce Around with Fun, Fly & Fit

Excel's K-2nd grade scholars enjoyed a fun filled assembly provided by the United Way of Greater Washington, DC. Fun, Fly & Fit is a youth fitness movement developed to help combat the childhood obesity crisis. The Bounce Around assembly taught our scholars how make good nutritional decisions and motivated them to play, exercise, and have fun. Scholars were encouraged to jump and dance during the assembly. Students oohed and aahed at the acrobat as she gracefully used her balance and strength to do tricks in the air and giggled as their teachers showed off their favorite dance moves. At Excel, we believe in providing our students with the skills they need to make positive lifestyle choices.

### Board of Trustees

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### To Donate or Volunteer:

Contact Kaye Savage  
 (202) 373-0097  
 Ksavage@excelpcs.org  
 www.excelpubliccharterschool.org

## Peaceful Playgrounds Arrives!

Excel parents gathered together on a sunny Saturday to create new play options for students on the black top.

Parents, under the direction of our PE teacher Jack Thomas, painted the blacktop with the Peaceful Playground kit awarded to Excel through a grant from the United Way, General Mills, and OSSE. The Peaceful Playgrounds kit provided permanent playground games painted onto the blacktop.

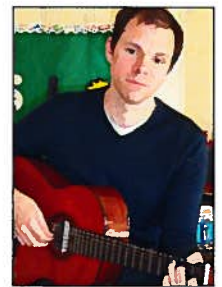


**Parent volunteers outline new playground games.**

These games will help make recess time more positive and productive: alphabet and number grids, hopping and skipping lines, and multiuse circles and squares are just a few of the games added. The program is intended to maximize the number of students involved in physical activity during recess.

## New Music Teacher: Jason Atkinson

Mr. Atkinson received his Master's of Music at the Cleveland Institute of Music and his Master's of Music Education at the City University of New York. He started playing the violin at age seven and now plays the guitar, saxophone, piano, and drums. Mr. Atkinson has composed and performed music in small ensemble settings, off Broadway musicals, and regional theater. He got his start as an educator with the NYC Teaching Fellows working in high risk schools in the Bronx.



**Jason Atkinson**

## Upcoming Events

- December 10: Half Day for Scholars
- December 11: Saturday Academy
- December 20 – 31: Winter Break
- January 3: Scholars Return from Break