



EXCEL ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

3845 SOUTH CAPITOL STREET, SW WASHINGTON, DC 20032 • (202) 373-0097 • EXCELPCS.ORG • FALL 2008

Washington's First All-Girls' Public Charter School Opens 134 Scholars Strong

ON AUGUST 13TH, Excel Academy welcomed 134 young scholars to their first day of school. The mood was that of wonder and amusement, with some tears here and there. For the most part, the girls were eager to begin on their path to a life of learning. After two and a half months of laying a solid school culture foundation, all seven (7) classes are focused on the task of learning new skills and knowledge.

In kindergarten, scholars are building literacy by practicing pronunciation, tracing sight words, and learning high frequency words. They are also learning about animals and life cycles, and studying math patterns. The Pre-K 4 classes are mastering their letters, colors, and descriptions of objects. The Preschoolers (2-3),



Howard Pre-K 4 classmates enjoy a lovely Autumn day.

(Pre-K 4) went on a nature walk to collect leaves for their collages. **American** (Pre-K 4) is exploring neighborhoods. **GW** (PS- 3) is making family albums. **Maryland** (PS-3) has found its bearings and mastered the arts of listening and sharing.

still negotiating group dynamics, are working on name recognition, letters, sounds, and fundamental writing skills.

Named after teachers' alma maters, each classroom has found their unique blend of academics and camaraderie. Many of the classrooms have made their own mark at Excel. **Georgetown** (K) had Excel's first afternoon tea party to celebrate an excellent week. **Spelman** (K) created a scholar size community in the multi-purpose room complete with a grocery store, post office, bank, hotel, and school. **Howard**

Message from the Founder

The opening of Excel Academy is a realization of a dream fueled by four years of incredibly hard work coupled with the perseverance and fortitude of an amazing group of area residents, businessmen and education advocates. I have been blessed to be surrounded by like-minded individuals to develop, establish, and implement the mission of Excel Academy: using education as the passport to the future by preparing our young scholars for tomorrow. Excel Academy will change the lives of these young girls and their families. After being an active parent advocate during my own children's education, I wanted to do something to address the devastating educational disparities that plague our communities, our city, and our Nation. As the only all-girls' public school in Washington, Excel Academy offers an alternative to District parents who desire something new for their daughters. I know I am joined by parents, faculty, staff, and board members in my delight in seeing the scholars grow and learn more and more each day.

Thank you for your support of our beginning. We look forward to sharing with you news of our scholars' journey.

Sincerely,
Kaye E. Savage, Founder

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New Developments

In September, Excel formed **Trinity College** for its youngest preschoolers. After school started, Excel realized that its youngest scholars needed a school community designed specifically for them. They now have their own class to explore and develop both individual and group skills. Each morning, Trinity scholars greet their classmates with a Good Morning, Please, May I, and Thank You are liberally used throughout the day. By having their own atmosphere, these young scholars have developed the discipline to learn and thrive.

Back-to-School and Parents' Night

On September 4th, Excel held its first Back-to-School Night. Parents came and met with teachers to discuss the progress of their scholars. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and guardians freely voiced their questions and concerns. All expressed their enthusiasm and support of their new school.

At the end of the Parents' Night on October 9th, a working group was formed to create Excel Academy's Parent Organization. Names and emails were exchanged and committees initiated. The fathers conveyed interest in forming their own committee to give additional support in the school's development. In addition, Parent Trustees will be selected from the already active parent group.

Enrichment Begins for After-School

Enrichment activities began in September to give scholars complimentary support to the academic program. Participants in After-School have been learning the art of Wushu or Kung Fu. Each age group works on balance, posture, breathing, and focus. Scholars receive the added benefit of learning some Chinese like *Lao shi hao*. The girls also participate in dancing and stage presence where they work on confidence and routine memorization. Enrichment activities will rotate on an 8 week cycle.

In addition to providing more learning opportunities, the After-School Program is a safe, structured environment for scholars while parents and families finish their working day.



Preschool scholars practice their stance during After-School.

The number of books read by Excel Academy as of 9/30/08:

1,940



Two Saturday Academies Down...

And plenty more to come. The first Saturday Academy (SA) was a bit hard on the Faculty and Staff who had to rise before dawn on their Saturday day of rest, but as the scholars arrived for the extra-curricular activities, the morning was worth it. During the September and October SAs, scholars took courses in yoga, line dancing, cooking, arts and crafts, Spanish, and sports.

Everyone on staff participates by sharing their own hobbies with the girls. It is difficult to describe the bond formed through spending quality "fun" time together. Excel's goal of supporting and enriching the whole scholar is well at work on these early Saturday mornings (once-a-month ☺).



Kindergarteners multi-task between arts & crafts and yoga.

Excel's First Field Trip: An Afternoon at the Kennedy Center

Through the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative's Arts for Every Student, **Georgetown** (K), **Spelman** (K), **American** (PK4), and **Howard** (PK4) took their first school bus ride over the Anacostia River to the banks of the Potomac to attend a "Kinderkonzert" presented by members of the National Symphony Orchestra. A total of 88 young scholars partook in the melodic and amusing renditions of Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert as the string quartet enacted "The Donkey, the Goat, and the Little Dog." The Kennedy Center field trip was a grand entry for the girls to begin their exposure to the cultural resources that Washington has to offer.

Excel scholars board the school buses provided by the DC Collaborative outside the Kennedy Center.



Scholars enjoy taking pictures to remember their 1st trip to the pumpkin patch.

Journey to Cox Farms

This field trip was much more than a trip to the pumpkin patch. The entire school including 20 parent chaperones trekked out to Centreville, Virginia on October 10th. The scholars enjoyed the beautiful autumn day with baby farm animals, rope swings, marvelous slides, and elaborate hayrides. Each child received a pumpkin to commemorate her day at the farm.



“Girls at Excel will have the ability to hone their academic and leadership interests and truly create their own future.”

The Washington Informer,
7/31-8/6/08, p. 17



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The Season of Giving

With Thanksgiving and the Winter Holidays just around the corner, consider the different ways you can support the scholars at Excel. Turkeys and food baskets will be given to our families in time for Thanksgiving. We will be collecting winter coats, gloves, hats, socks, boots, and scarves throughout the season to keep our girls nice and warm. Don't forget new books and toys for those special days in December.

Upcoming Events

October 31	Fall into Reading Festival
November/December	Winter Wear Drive
Thanksgiving	Baskets of Bounty for Families in Need
December	Winter Wonderland

