

Excel Academy Charter School Graduate Services

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- We are a network of tuition free, public middle schools serving East Boston, Chelsea, and the surrounding communities
- Conceived to address the severe academic underperformance and low college matriculation rates of the student populations in these neighborhoods
- The network's first school opened in fall 2003 to 100 6th grade students, and now serves 212 students in grades 5 through 8.
- Excel Academy-Chelsea, the 2nd school in the network, opened this fall to 56 5th graders
- The 3rd Excel Academy School will open in East Boston in Fall 2012 with 56 5th graders
- Excel's combined 2008 and 2009 MCAS growth scores are higher than all other charter schools and school districts in Massachusetts for both English and math
- Excel ranked #1 in the state in 7th grade math and 8th grade English on the 2011 MCAS.



■ Students:

- 72% of students are low-income (qualifying for free or reduce-priced lunch)
- 72% of students are Latino(a)
- 55% of students report speaking a language other than English in the home (predominantly Spanish)
- 84% will be first generation college students
- 15% of students receive Special Education Services
- 5% are formally classified as English Language Learners

■ Alumni:

- We have 190 9-12 grade alumni
 - In 53 high schools throughout the northeast
- We have 132 post-secondary alumni
 - In over 40 different colleges/universities nationwide
- Our oldest alumni are currently sophomores in college



EXCEL

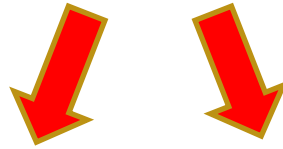
Our Mission

Excel Academy Charter School prepares middle school students **to succeed in high school and college**, apply their learning to solve relevant problems, and engage productively in their communities.





**8th grade- High School
Placement: 50 students**



9th – 12th : 188 students

**Independent
and Parochial + public,
charter,
pilot**



**Post-
Secondary:
135 students**



- Homerooms names after alumni colleges
 - College-going alumni come in and speak to younger students about their college experience
 - Pen pal
 - Campus maps with dorm/academic buildings circled
- College visits
 - Every grade goes on at least one college visit every year (generally goes to a homeroom namesake)
 - Try to have alumni at those colleges come see students while we are on campus
 - Often stop into key resource centers at colleges i.e. Latino/a Center, Academic Support Center
- College T-Shirt Fridays
- Homerooms are encouraged to discuss college experiences with students

■ 7th Grade

- SSAT prep
- HS placement class (4th quarter)

■ 8th Grade

- HS Placement class (1st – 3rd quarters)
 - Led by DHSP, students and families learn about all high school options and are supported through the high school application process
- Freshman Academy
- Graduate Seminar (4th quarter)



- **Freshman Academy and the Graduate Seminar course came out of:**
 - Observed need for alumni to develop certain executive functioning, social, and organization skills necessary for high school success BEFORE they go to high school
 - Prepare students for a less regulated/structured environment
 - Support among the administration to put resources toward addressing these skill deficits
 - Willingness among 8th grade team to put extra time and effort into implementing these programs

- A 14 week program beginning in March of 8th grade in which specific daily structures at Excel are scaffolded back to facilitate students in learning and practicing needed executive functioning, organizational, and social skills for high school
- A new skill is introduced every other week in 8th grade Community Circle on Thursday, then implemented the following Monday
- Students have 2 weeks to practice a new skill before adding another
 - *Note: we do not run Freshman academy during ELA and Math MCAS*
- Skills are cumulative
- Skill sequence
 1. Choose your own organizational system
 2. Flex block
 3. Schedule change with silent transitions
 4. Schedule change with pass system, non-uniform days
 5. Multi-day assignments
 6. Unassigned seats



- **Organizational system choice**
 - SWBAT learn to identify and implement an organizational system that best works for them that they can take with them to high school
- **Simulated “free block”**
 - SWBAT learn to manage unstructured time during the day
- **Schedule with Classroom Changes**
 - SWBAT navigate using a personalized schedule and manage materials and time to arrive to class on-time and prepared
 - **used in conjunction with pass system**
- **Non-uniform days**
 - SWBAT learn how to dress appropriately for school without a uniform
 - **used in conjunction with pass system**
- **Overlapping Multi-Day Assignments in core classes**
 - SWBAT plan their work for and successfully complete multi-day assignments in core classes.
- **Unassigned Seats:**
 - SWBAT make appropriate choices about where to sit

- 50 minute weekly class co-taught by Laura Goldworm and Nicole Simoes
- Begins in 3rd quarter of 8th grade year, replaces “High School Placement” elective course
- Goals:
 - Help students understand ways that high school may differ from the Excel experience
 - Set personal goals and teach students how to utilize support services at their high schools to reach those goals
 - Create buy in for engagement in GSD & Excel Alumni Network
 - Begin early college and financial awareness necessary to start students on the college path

Examples of lessons from our syllabus that map on to class goals:

- Help students understand ways that high school may differ from the Excel experience
 - *How to read and analyze high school report card*
 - *Consistently soliciting and answering students' general questions about high school*
- Discussing goal setting and teaching students how to utilize support services at their high schools to reach those goals
 - *Letter to themselves: what do you want out of high school?*
 - *Common alumni pitfalls & how to avoid them*
- Create buy in for engagement in GSD & Excel Alumni Network
 - *Intro to Grad Services Dept & timeline of supports provided/event calendar*
 - *Graduate Panel* – alums come back to answer questions and give advice to 8th graders
- Begin early college and financial awareness necessary to start students on the college path
 - *Introduce standardized testing, AP classes, math tracks, college application process, financial aid and outside scholarship application process*
 - *Mock College Admissions Panel* – students use mock college application packets to model a College Admissions Office's committee meeting
 - *Interpreting college financial aid offer letters* – students use their knowledge of scholarships, grants, and loans to determine which financial aid offer letter is most generous

Every student enrolled in the Graduate Services Program receives the following supports:

- Visit each student's high school two times per year
- Track grades
- Encourage and track participation in extracurricular activities
- Assistance in finding a productive summer opportunity
- Create and facilitate several workshops and events
 - Career night
 - College application workshops
 - Financial Aid workshops
 - Reunions and social events (3-on-3 Basketball Tournament)
- Ad Hoc crisis management and support
- College counseling



We provide the following supports:

- College trips
- Support students in taking the SAT, SAT Subject Tests
- Workshops on the college application, and financial aid process
- Development of college list
- College application completion
 - College Application Boot Camps
- Financial aid strategy and support
 - completing necessary documents
 - FAFSA Completion Day
 - finding and applying for scholarships
 - Scholarship of The Month emails
 - Understanding financial aid packages, appealing when appropriate
- Matriculation Support (paperwork, setting up financial plans, choosing courses etc.)



- **Ensure students matriculate and persist in college**
 - Academic and financial counseling and advocacy
 - Transfer support (including 2-4 year school transfers)
 - Relationship building with key support people at colleges/universities
 - Gear Up To College Day
 - College Alumni Panel, Parent Panel
- **Work with student not in college to have a productive post-secondary plan**
 - re-engaging non-matriculated students in higher education
 - Gap year programs (Year Up)
- **Support students in the military**
- **Workplace development** i.e. State House and Excel Internship employment assistance
- **Social events**

High School Placement

- 100% of 8th graders will be accepted to at least one college-prep high school.
- 90% of the class of 2012 will matriculate to college prep high schools.

Graduate Support

- 90% of all Excel alumni will graduate from high school
- 75% of each senior class will matriculate to a 2 or 4 year college

Post-Secondary Support

- 85% of students enrolled at a 2 year college will be on track to transfer to a 4 year school or graduate within two years of their enrollment.
- 50% of Excel Alumni will earn a bachelor's degree with 6 years of high school graduation



Of the Excel's First 2 Classes:

- 94.7% (126/133) High School graduation rate

***compared to 58% for BPS students*

- 77.3% (102/132) college matriculation rate

***compared to 31% for BPS Latino/a students*