



Legacy Charter School

Report on Our School • November 2010



‘Chicago’s Best-Kept Secret’

The 2009–10 school year has been a year of growth and success for Legacy. We started our middle school and added an additional 6th grade classroom to facilitate specialization in subject-area teaching, which prepares our scholars for the teaching and learning they will experience in high school. Our charter has been renewed with great praise. Our scholars continue to achieve and improve. The school and its leaders have received awards and accolades.

This year, our sixth, we have approximately 450 scholars enrolled in pre-K through 7th grade. About 90 percent of our scholars returned in the current school year and the previous two school years, an exceptionally high rate. An even higher percentage of our staff returned in each of those years. Such stability is rare and is very important to Legacy’s success.

Legacy was one of only 30 schools in Illinois and one of only nine in Chicago to be recognized as a 2009 Illinois Spotlight School and to receive the 2009 Academic Improvement Award from the Illinois Honor Roll. Illinois Spotlight Schools are exemplary schools where high academic

performance is closing the “achievement gap” in high-poverty areas. Spotlight Schools are honored for achievements that contradict the conventional wisdom that test scores always reflect demographics. The Academic Improvement Award is given to schools that have made substantial gains in performance over the past three years and demonstrate that exemplary progress is not only possible at every level but also sustainable.

Legacy went through its charter renewal process, and the Chicago Board of Education voted to renew Legacy’s charter for another five-year term. As part of this process, a Renewal Site Visit (RSV) team of five experienced educators, working on behalf of the board of education, spent two very full days at Legacy interviewing teachers, staff, parents, scholars, board members and administrators, and visiting virtually every classroom. They described Legacy as “Chicago’s best-kept secret.” Their report summary stated:

The two-day RSV revealed an unwavering commitment to the school’s mission,

continued on page 2

Individual Voices Matter



One of our 5th grade scholars, J'Khai, accompanied his mother to the public hearing that was part of Legacy's charter renewal process. The meeting took place in the very imposing Chicago Public Schools Board Room. J'Khai attended with his mother because she wanted to speak at the hearing and could not arrange child care for him. Although there had been no plan for J'Khai to speak, when he arrived at the hearing, he asked if he could. The official summary of the hearing reports:

The student likes the curriculum. Discipline is handled in a spirit of cooperation and not harsh. The teachers talk to him. He is changing his past and improving his future. Teachers help him if he is failing. He was below in reading and they took him out

[of class for individual work] to help him understand how to do it. They are trying to prepare him for college.

This says it all about Legacy. J'Khai has learned that his voice matters. He feels empowered and skilled in expressing himself effectively, even in an extremely intimidating atmosphere. He knows he is "changing his past and improving his future." What more can we ask of our scholars or of ourselves?

As one parent said at the end-of-the-year Legacy ceremony: "Legacy has opened a door for its scholars." Without Legacy that door would be closed. Legacy scholars have the opportunity to walk through that door and realize their potential in extraordinary ways.

'Chicago's Best Kept Secret'

continued from page 1

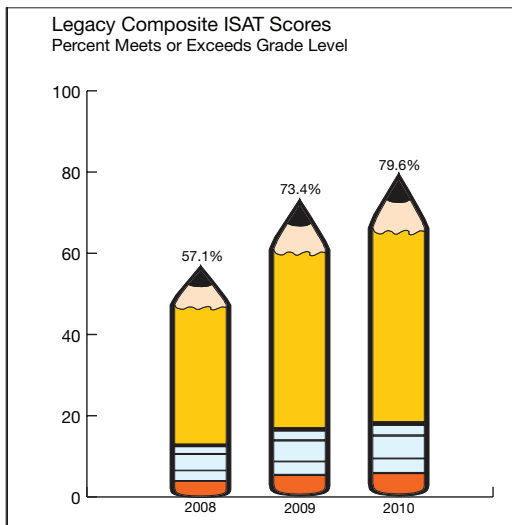
focus on teaching and learning, and an extraordinary place for all to get better at what they do.... Governance provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school, has intimate knowledge of scholars, staff and school programs, and demonstrates an acute awareness of the challenges that lie ahead. The exceedingly effective school/business partnership is instrumental to school development and operations and can serve as a model for other school business partnerships. The school is well-resourced with instructional supplies and materials.... In partnership with a highly skilled and committed leadership team, the school's visionary principal effectively empowers all

staff to participate in continuous refinement of the school.... The Legacy Charter School is an authentic learning community. The uniquely supportive climate and culture, exceptional leadership and commitment among stakeholders, and an unyielding belief in each scholar's potential, makes the Legacy Charter School an outstanding school....

Our principal, Lisa Kenner, has been recognized by New Leaders for New Schools for her "outstanding leadership." Our Board Chairman, Errol Stone, received *The American Lawyer's* Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his work as a lawyer and in founding and leading Legacy.

Impressive Test Results

Legacy’s test results continue to show steady, significant increases in performance, with 79.6 percent of our scholars meeting or exceeding grade level on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) composite score for 2009–10. This is up from 73.4 percent meeting or exceeding grade level in 2008–09, which was itself a 16.3 percentage point increase over school year 2007–08.



Legacy’s score exceeded the Chicago Public Schools’ (CPS’) composite 69.5 percent meet-or-exceed score for 2009–10. This score for all CPS includes selective enrollment schools and other schools with very different demographics from Legacy’s. Legacy’s performance far exceeds the average that the CPS calculates for the district schools that Legacy’s scholars would most likely have attended if they were not with us. According to CPS’ 2008–09 Performance Report (the most recent one we have), the average composite score for those schools was 57 percent.

Since the ISAT begins in 3rd grade, it tests only about half of our scholars. In the earlier grades we use the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) assessment for reading. This evaluation, developed at the University of Chicago, sets a much higher bar for grade level achievement. Being at grade level on the STEP roughly corresponds to “exceeding grade level” on the ISAT. Our STEP scores for the past three school years are as follows:

STEP: Percent Meet or Exceed

| School Year | PreK | Kinder | 1st Grade | 2nd Grade |
|-------------|------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| 2009-10 | 93 | 75 | 58 | 51 |
| 2008-09 | 98 | 71 | 38 | 40 |
| 2007-08 | N/A | 33 | 23 | 23 |



Our 2009–10 STEP scores highlight Legacy’s long-term potential. As these scholars progress through elementary school, our continuing goal is to ensure that their performance will be superb and they will be well prepared for extraordinary academic opportunities as they move on to high school and college. As one small example, we have substantially revamped our 1st grade curriculum to make it more challenging, a reflection of the fact that our former kindergarten scholars are prepared to achieve at a higher level.

Growing in Lasting Ways

Legacy's mission is to create an outstanding center for teaching and learning for children and their families that will recognize and nurture the full potential of every child, provide a foundation for a college education and educate our students to be creative and critical thinkers and responsible citizens in school, at home and in the broader community.

Legacy remains true to its mission. Two very experienced educators from New Leaders for New Schools recently visited Legacy and agreed. One stated: "While many schools can write a mission statement of high expectations for every student, I have seen few schools that live those expectations as powerfully as Legacy does. And these expectations include not only academic performance for every student, but ensuring that every Legacy scholar is an independent leader, learner, and self-advocate." The other educator said: "We must meld academics with growing children's character in ways that will give them the emotional as well as intellectual strength to persevere, develop, thrive and become productive, successful adults. Legacy is doing this every day... This fusion of instruction and character building is Legacy's soul and hallmark; it is what will change young lives so that Legacy scholars can grow in lasting ways that will change them and positively impact their community."

Fine arts and sports are also core elements in Legacy's academic program. Our curriculum offers visual arts, music, oratory, physical education and frequent study trips. This allows scholars to build skills with new materials, explore different ways



of expressing ideas and deepen critical thinking.

Legacy values, encourages and supports a high level of parental involvement. Our goal-setting conferences involve the scholar, family and teacher. A specific social/emotional goal and a specific academic goal for each scholar are determined in these meetings. In many classrooms, these goals hang on the wall. At Legacy Circle, a schoolwide assembly, scholars share their achievements and parents are invited to share their hopes and aspirations for their children. Family Learning Nights, report card pick-up events and schoolwide celebrations also provide opportunities for family engagement. Our Parent Leaders have organized a successful fundraiser, popular skating event, movie nights and family education programs, and they direct traffic outside the school every day. Parental and family engagement and involvement are critical to our scholars' success.

We have significantly increased our use of technology. All Legacy teachers received document cameras and projectors this year



to enhance the learning experience. This equipment allows teachers to project images from their laptops and to teach explicit

lessons using paper and/or objects that are projected so that the scholars know exactly what to do as the teacher demonstrates. A laptop cart was also added this year so that 5th, 6th and 7th grades can use laptops in their classrooms. This is in addition to the two computer labs, each of which accommodates about 26 scholars. We are also expanding our use of various software and online technologies, such as Google Apps for Education.