

Uncommon Schools

EXCELLENCE NORTH STAR COLLEGIATE TRUE NORTH PREPARATORY

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PRESS RELEASE

NORTH STAR ACADEMY POSTS OUTSTANDING RESULTS ON 2008 NEW JERSEY STATE ASSESSMENTS Students Close Achievement Gap

October 20, 2008. *Newark, NJ.* North Star Academy Charter School of Newark posted exceptional results on the 2008 New Jersey State Math and English Language Arts assessments. North Star's 7th and 8th grade students closed the achievement gap in both Math and ELA. On the state exams, 92% of 7th grade students and 100% of 8th grade students scored advanced or proficient in Math and ELA, significantly outperforming the state's White students.

Overall, across 5th through 8th grades, 86% of North Star's students scored advanced or proficient on the Math exam, besting the overall state average by 16 percentage points and the White student average by six percentage points. On the ELA exam, 78% of North Star's students scored advanced or proficient, topping the state average by 11 percentage points. The release of the 2008 New Jersey State exam results highlights the exceptional performance of North Star's students:

- At North Star's two middle schools, 100% of 8th graders scored advanced or proficient on the 2008 New Jersey State ELA exam, compared to 81% of 8th graders across the state. Further, 100% of 8th graders scored advanced or proficient on the 2008 New Jersey State math exam, compared to 68% of 8th graders across the state.
- At the high school level, 89% of North Star 11th graders scored advanced or proficient on the 2008 New Jersey High School Assessment in Language Arts, compared to 83% of 11th graders across the state and 64% across the Newark district.
- North Star Elementary posted very strong results in its first year, as measured by the TerraNova. At the end of the 2007-2008 academic year, 99% of Kindergarten students scored at or above grade level in reading on the Terra Nova, compared to 18% at the beginning of the year. Further, 99% of the same cohort scored at or above grade level in math, compared to 26% at the beginning of the year.

The mission of North Star Academy, which enrolls 760 students across four campuses, is to prepare each student for college. Over 75% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced price lunch. The North Star schools are among the eleven schools in the nonprofit Uncommon Schools network. Uncommon Schools CEO Evan Rudall notes, "These results demonstrate that we are effectively closing the achievement gap and providing students with rigorous academic programs to prepare them for success in college and beyond."

North Star Academy is one of New Jersey's very first, and most-celebrated, charter public schools. Co-founded by James Verrilli and Norman Atkins, the school has become a nationally recognized

model for academic success. For five consecutive years, 100% of each North Star graduating class has enrolled in four-year colleges such as Boston College, Cornell University, Rutgers University, Spelman College, and the University of Chicago. “As we grow the North Star network, our results show that our students are learning and working really hard so that they will be ready to go to college and to join our current alumni as college students and college graduates,” said North Star Co-founder and Downtown Campus Middle School Principal Jamey Verrilli.

All schools across the Uncommon network consistently outperform their neighboring district schools and rank among the top schools in their cities and states. The schools share common elements proven to be successful in preparing urban students for academic and college success: a highly structured learning environment, a longer school day and a longer school year, standards-based instructional models, and proven curricula that are data-driven and informed by ongoing assessments.

Uncommon Schools is a nonprofit organization that starts and manages outstanding urban charter public schools that close the achievement gap and prepare low-income students to graduate from college. Uncommon builds uncommonly great schools by developing and managing regional networks that are philosophically aligned and highly accountable. Based in New York City, the organization has created a home office from which it provides management services that allow school leaders to focus on instructional leadership. Uncommon manages eleven schools in New York City, upstate New York, and Newark, New Jersey and has two associate member schools in Boston, Massachusetts. The organization will grow to include nearly 30 schools serving 8,000 students within five years and ultimately will encompass more than 30 schools, serving more than 11,000 K to 12th grade students. For more information, please visit <http://www.uncommonschools.org>.

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If you would like additional information on this topic, or to schedule an interview with North Star Founding Principal Jamey Verrilli, North Star Academy Network Managing Director Paul Bambrick, or Uncommon Schools CEO Evan Rudall, please contact Megan C. Zug via telephone at 617-645-4063 or via email at mzug@uncommonschools.org.