



CONTACT INFO:

Anne D'Appolonia
Director of Marketing, Propel Schools
412-325-7305 x105
adappolonia@propelschools.org

Propel MCKEESPORT and Propel MONTOUR Win National Achievement Awards

EPIC Awards Recognize Outstanding Student Performance on State Tests

PITTSBURGH, March 9, 2011 – Propel McKeesport and Propel Montour are two of just 18 charter schools from across the country to be honored with an Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) award from New Leaders for New Schools, for accomplishing breakthrough student achievement gains. This is the first EPIC award for Propel Montour and the third consecutive EPIC award for Propel McKeesport. Propel operates six local charter schools serving more than 2,000 students in grades K-12. Propel McKeesport and Propel Montour both serve approximately 400 students in grades K-8.

EPIC was established in 2006 to link principal and teacher incentive pay to the wide-scale sharing of effective educational practices. The program identifies school leaders and instructional staff driving student achievement gains, and then awards these educators in exchange for sharing the practices that have helped lead to the gains. EPIC is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), charter school partners and private philanthropic funders. This year, 18 award winners were selected from 175 charter schools across 23 states and the District of Columbia competing in the EPIC National Charter School Consortium.

“We are very proud to be recognized on a national level for our work in public education,” said Dr. Carol Wooten, Propel's Superintendent. “This is a particularly exciting year for Propel Montour, who is receiving this prestigious award for the first time “

Propel Montour students demonstrated overall growth (from '08-'09 to '09-'10 PSSA tests) of 15.4 percentage points in reading and 14.6 percentage points in math. On last year's state tests, the 3rd grade class was 97% proficient in math and students in grades

3-6 were 90% proficient in math. 63% of Propel Montour students are eligible for the free/reduced price lunch program, 45% are a minority and 12% have special needs.

Propel McKeesport students scored 90% proficient or advanced on state tests last year. These performance levels are consistent with much more affluent school districts such as North Allegheny, Fox Chapel, Mt. Lebanon and Upper St. Clair. In contrast to these districts, 84% of Propel McKeesport students are eligible for the free/reduced price lunch program and 74% are students of color.

The power of EPIC lies in the opportunity for educators to learn from one another about the practices that contribute to achievement gains. All EPIC award-winning schools engage in a thorough investigation with the EPIC team to study and document the school practices and leadership actions that contributed to their student success. Case studies and profiles from all 18 award-winning charter schools will be posted on the EPIC Knowledge System, a rich online professional development resource that educators can use to build capacity for school improvement and impact student achievement.

About Propel Schools

The mission of Propel Schools is to catalyze the transformation of public education so that all children have access to high performing public schools. This mission is pursued by opening and operating high performance schools of choice in educationally underserved communities on the belief that establishing a competitive dynamic in public education is the best way to provide the region's public schools with sustained incentives for the hard work of continuous self improvement.

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