



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Talent is everywhere! It is in every neighborhood. At Higher Achievement, we are reaching out for that talent. Since its inception in 1975, the Higher Achievement Program ("HAP") has challenged thousands of under-served fifth through eighth grade scholars in the District of Columbia to achieve their highest potential for academic performance and community leadership. Year after year, we raise the bar, and bright young scholars reach up and grab it!

Higher Achievement is successful because it develops safe, Achievement Centers that foster a community of knowledge-seekers, where academic achievement is valued, exciting, and above all FUN. In these Achievement Centers, the year-round Academy employs rigorous academic curricula that match the grade-appropriate educational standards from the Stanford 9. Further, our scholars work with well-trained and committed adult learning mentors, teachers, and studio leaders, who maintain a stalwart commitment to actualizing a full-scale learning community.

Higher Achievement constructs learning communities explicitly and implicitly. We lift chins. Our children are told that they are bright every day; and by cheering them on every single day, we get amazing results. We connect them with a peer group that faces down the negative stereotypes attached to academic achievement. They realize that they can win praise and accolades for being such smart people. They proudly understand that we do not just call them scholars - they are scholars.

Further, Higher Achievement believes that intellectual abilities are built through effort - not nature. Therefore, we offer entrance to any fifth through eighth grader who demonstrates intellectual curiosity, and a steadfast commitment to learning. Currently, the Higher Achievement Program operates four Achievement Centers serving 300 under-served children.

# OUR VISION

Higher Achievement shares a vision of Washington, DC as a city where all children can access the resources and opportunities that enable them to achieve academically and to elect their educational futures. We envision a world where the intellectual achievements of the scholar are as valued as the physical achievements of the athlete.

# OUR VALUES

Higher Achievement stands behind three core values:

- Talent is everywhere –in every child and every community
- Intellectual capacities are built on effort
- Opportunities to advance and realize one’s potential are critical

# OUR MISSION

Higher Achievement believes talent is everywhere. Our mission is to develop critical academic behaviors, habits, and attitudes in the District of Columbia's academically motivated and underserved middle school children in order to improve their grades, standardized test scores, and attendance; and increase their educational opportunities through acceptance and scholarships to private, parochial and public magnet high school programs.

# OUR GOALS

- To improve student academic achievement: grades, standardized exam scores, and attendance
- To send all Higher Achievement graduates to select high schools
- To make academic excellence a valued goal in under-served communities

# DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS

*Higher Achievement works neighborhood by neighborhood to construct year-round learning communities, consisting of the After School Academy, Summer Academy and Follow Through Program. The curriculum taught during the academies teaches accelerated lessons through the lens of social justice, with four themes: freedom, voice, solidarity, and justice.*

## AFTER SCHOOL ACADEMY

The 26-week after-school program offers academic enrichment activities three days a week during the school year.

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.	Scholars connect with their Center Director, attend supervised study hall, receive homework assistance, and have a light dinner <sup>1</sup> .
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Scholars commit to three semester long multicultural studios, such as Afro-Caribbean Music, Pottery, and Chess.
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Scholars receive rigorous teaching (three students to one educator) in Literature, Mathematics and Technology.
Saturdays	Scholars participate in monthly field trips and community service projects.

## SUMMER ACADEMY

This six ½ -week summer program operates from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. five days a week. A trained teaching staff conducts courses in English, Science, Mathematics and International Relations, with one elective course such as leadership, technology, journalism, foreign language, or law/mock trial. These classes bolster scholars' academic skills and provide much-needed continuity and reinforcement in preparation for the coming school year. Further, scholars participate in weekly field trips and community improvement projects and travel on one overnight educational trip.

## FOLLOW THROUGH PROGRAM

The Follow Through Program helps scholars identify and pursue accelerated middle and high school programs that will continue to challenge them academically. After investing four years in the Higher Achievement Program, there are opportunities to go to accelerated high schools, public magnet schools, parochial schools, and private schools. To take advantage of those opportunities, Higher Achievement offers scholars test preparation classes, application workshops, interview coaching, and support to families as they navigate the application, student interview, and financial aid process of high school admissions.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the homework help and dinnertime is optional (between 3:30-5:30 p.m.), 95% of scholars participate.

# WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE?

## INVESTMENT OVER TIME

Higher Achievement is a sustained four-year intervention committed to developing scholars' academic habits, behaviors and skills through rigorous academic and skills work. Scholars enter the program in fifth grade and commit to attending Higher Achievement's Academy year round to receive accelerated instruction in literature, math, technology, science, social studies and various electives. Each scholar is expected to complete a portfolio demonstrating his/her mastery of SAT 9 required skills; and each semester scholars, parents, mentors and staff evaluate the academic performance of each scholar. Be it the daily rituals that allow scholars to share their accomplishments to "lifting chins" whenever scholars speak, Higher Achievement creates a culture that values intellectual curiosity, long-term academic commitment and scholastic achievement.

## CURRICULA

Higher Achievement curricula blend the soundness of classical skill acquisition with fresh voices and ideas. Within a fabric of Freedom, Voice, Solidarity and Justice, scholars learn subject verb agreement reading Frederick Douglass' "*What is Your Fourth of July to Me?*" speech, literary devices with Rudolfo Anaya, **Sister Souljah**, and Langston Hughes and paragraph structure reading Mahatma Ghandi's writings. In mathematics, the conversion of percentages to decimals to fractions is taught with Duke Ellington's musical scores; and in science, scholars study race evolution and genetics and discuss current debates around Darwinism, the Bell Curve and genetic engineering. Scholars are introduced to advanced concepts in individual and dynamic ways that increases academic confidence and achievement, cultural awareness and reinforces grade-appropriate skill standards as tested by the Stanford Nine exam.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Scholars are expected and encouraged to set high academic goals for themselves. To assist them, Higher Achievement has created the Follow Through Program. Follow Through helps scholars identify and pursue accelerated middle and high school programs that will continue to challenge them academically. Higher Achievement offers test preparation classes, application workshops, interview coaching, opportunities to meet with representatives from select public magnet, private and parochial schools, and support as families navigate the financial aid process. As well, Higher Achievement has formed partnerships with organizations that provide financial and mentoring support to students transitioning from public to private school. Further, scholars are exposed to a wide variety of other academic opportunities, from prominent men and women in the science/technology field through our Achievement Speaks series to experiencing college life during a three-day overnight trip.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **What is Higher Achievement?**

The Higher Achievement Program, or HAP, is an after-school academic enrichment program that provides education in math, literature, science, social studies and technology to children in the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades during out of school time. With intellectually curious middle-schoolers, Higher Achievement dedicates attention to developing the attitudes, behaviors and skills “*of a scholar*” in order to improve grades and expand opportunities for DC’s under-served youth.

## **Where is Higher Achievement Located?**

Currently, Higher Achievement operates five Achievement Centers in distressed areas of Washington, DC and Alexandria, Virginia. Each Center is partnered with a neighborhood school. Centers include: the Ward 1 Center at Lincoln/Bell Multicultural School in Mount Pleasant, the Ward 6 Center at Stuart Hobson Middle School near Capitol Hill, the Ward 7 Center at Kelly Miller Middle School, and the Ward 4 Center at Paul Junior High near Georgia Avenue. The Alexandria Center will be held at Hammond Middle School.

## **How Large is Higher Achievement?**

Currently, Higher Achievement serves more than 400 motivated, yet disadvantaged, middle school students living or attending school in Washington, DC and 60 students in the city of Alexandria. Higher Achievement staff consists of 20 full time positions and more than 300 volunteer mentors and 30 summer teachers. The FY 2006 budget is approximately \$1.7 million.

## **What do Students Learn at Higher Achievement?**

Higher Achievement’s education model was developed to foster analytical thinking, judgment, problem-solving and academic skills. The four-year curricula include core academic courses combined with cultural education. The core courses, math, literature, and technology, are designed according to the grade-appropriate standards in education from the Stanford 9. In addition to these core subjects, students choose an elective studio such as journalism, foreign languages, Creative Arts, or Capoeira. During the summer, scholars will take five classes a day, every day, for eight (8) hours a day. In science, they will create DNA models made from pasta in *Race Evolution and Genetics* class, study organic waste and decomposition by creating and maintaining worm bins, and measure the amount of carbon dioxide in a running tail pipe. Scholars will study the economic fundamentals like supply and demand, price ceilings and speculation in math and simulate the development of a UN Resolution on Child Labor in social studies. Finally, Higher Achievement believes that academic and cultural exposure is essential to inspire the mind. Therefore, scholars attend lectures, academic contests and take part in community activities.

## **Who Teaches these Courses?**

Community volunteers, trained to be Learning Mentors, give their time to motivate, teach, and advise these young people so that they may achieve their academic and personal potential. Mentors meet their students every week to teach them the Higher Achievement curricula, and they use the curricula to develop study skills, comprehension methods, and winning attitudes. Each mentor is assigned no more than three students, so that the scholars learn in an intimate and interactive environment. Furthermore, a mentor offers a support system. A mentor understands, encourages, motivates and educates.

## **How does Higher Achievement Measure its Success?**

Higher Achievement scholars develop study skills, expanded knowledge, and self esteem. They learn poise and confidence in the classroom and in public speaking arenas. Higher Achievement measures success by tracking improvements on five quantitative performance indicators: 1) school grades, 2) standardized test scores, 3) attendance, 4) tardiness and 5) high school choice. In addition, qualitative performance indicators will be tracked by faculty regarding student participation (faculty document on daily review sheet if scholars asked more, same, or less questions than yesterday) and parents time spent reading. To manage this data, Higher Achievement maintains a Management Information System (MIS) to track students, mentors, teachers and parents, and quantify and qualify academic achievements.