

Freire Charter School

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The Power to Build Your Future

CSP Grant: ED 84.282B

Project Title: Opening of Freire Charter Middle School

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Project Abstract

Freire Charter School was founded in 1999, with the goal of providing a college preparatory education to students in Philadelphia. We currently serve approximately 500 students in grades 9-12 from all across the city, with an emphasis on collaborative, experiential learning, non-violence, individual freedom, and critical thinking. The school population is 99% African-American and during the 2010-2011 school year, 78% of the student body qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Over the course of the school's existence, average daily attendance and graduation rates have each averaged over 90%. In 2010, Freire Charter School was recognized as a Title I Distinguished School based on student achievement gains and was also named a Silver Gain through the EPIC Awards program, sponsored by New Leaders for New Schools, based on longitudinal student achievement gains.

In an effort to improve the overall quality and rigor of our program, we are preparing to launch a complete middle school program, serving 1,000 students across grades 5-12, during the fall of 2012. Kelly Davenport will continue to serve as the Head of School, overseeing the development of both schools. In launching a middle school program, Freire Charter School hopes that by moving students into our program at a younger age, we will be able to have increased success in preparing students for college.

Research shows that the latest one can start a college-preparatory curriculum and be truly ready for college is sixth grade¹. While over ninety percent of Freire's graduates attend college each year, many still need remediation once there, with students particularly struggling in the sciences. We must get our kids out of their failing schools earlier so they are ready for our high school curriculum, and we must produce graduates who can be academically ready to select any major, at any college. Freire's expansion to include middle school students will provide an additional high-quality charter school to parents and students in Philadelphia and will bolster our high school program to ensure students are increasingly prepared for the rigors of postsecondary academics.

¹ Wimberly, George L. and Richard J. Noeth. College Readiness Begins in Middle School: ACT Policy Report, 2005.