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Oakland Charter Schools Assessed for Effectiveness; Recognized Nationally for Student Progress

Local schools post significant achievement gains in national, value-added analysis

NEW YORK (March 5, 2009) – The Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC), a national initiative of New Leaders for New Schools, today announced the conclusion of the second year of a major, cross-state analysis of charter school achievement. Two local Oakland-area charter schools were recognized for their remarkable effectiveness.

Using a value-added model to analyze performance data from nearly 150 charter schools across the country during the 2007-2008 school year, EPIC identified 21 schools that have made the most dramatic gains in student achievement including Lighthouse Community Charter High School (Oakland Chinatown) and Monarch Academy, Aspire Public Schools (East Oakland).

These two schools are part of EPIC's broad, national consortium of charter schools from all regions of the country. All EPIC charter schools serve high-need populations – on average, more than 70% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch – but are very diverse in their instructional philosophies and management styles. EPIC analyzed performance data from the schools in its National Charter School Consortium and recognized those that have made the largest gains in achievement. EPIC will identify and catalogue concrete and replicable practices from these schools that can be shared with other institutions across the country using EPIC's innovative online Knowledge System.

“We are incredibly thankful to EPIC for recognizing the hard work, commitment, and determination the students, teachers and staff at Monarch have devoted to improving educational success and achievement,” said Tatiana Epanchin, Principal at Monarch Academy. “As a public charter school, we have the opportunity to develop new, more effective ways of boosting student achievement. We look forward to showcasing our work through EPIC in the hope that others can learn from our experience.”

Like their peers at charter schools around the country, Lighthouse and Monarch have identified and implemented programs and initiatives that have led to new and effective student achievement practices:

- **Lighthouse Community Charter High School** – Lighthouse is a small, diverse high school serving a high number of ESL students in the educationally disadvantaged Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods of Oakland. Last school year, Lighthouse made dramatic gains in literacy – an especially rare achievement for a secondary school. Individual educators at Lighthouse Community Charter School will receive awards totaling an estimated \$29,000.

- **Monarch Academy, Aspire Public Schools** – A part of the larger Aspire charter management organization, Monarch serves a diverse student body, 93 percent of which is eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The school teaches kindergarten through 5th grade and uses strong family and community partnerships to provide a solid foundation for all students – regardless of background – as they prepare for middle school, high school and college. Individual educators at Monarch Academy will receive awards totaling an estimated \$67,000.

“What we are learning from charter schools like Lighthouse and Monarch are effective practices that will positively impact student achievement for other schools across the country,” said Dianne Houghton, Chief Community Products Officer of New Leaders for New Schools. “These schools have proven that effective institutions can and do have a dramatic impact on student achievement no matter their students’ backgrounds or prior schooling.”

The EPIC value-added model uses state test results in reading and math to measure the impact of a school on its students over time. Whereas traditional achievement models measure schools based on the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency benchmarks in a given year, the EPIC model measures the progress students make from one year to the next, independent of proficiency targets.

“We are honored to be recognized by EPIC and New Leaders for New Schools,” said Stephen Sexton, Director of Secondary Programs at Lighthouse Community Charter School. “But, more importantly, we are excited to be part of this group of innovative educators that are striving to put forth the best for our students and share our effective practices with other schools as a model. The challenges we face are very similar, and a network like this will open doors to more effective learning across the board and allow us to communicate how to best serve our students.”

EPIC’s National Charter School Consortium, currently in its second year, is made up of 144 eligible schools in 17 states and the District of Columbia. The Consortium’s goal is to connect with and learn from schools serving high-need populations that are making significant gains in student achievement. EPIC is funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), school district and charter school partners, and private philanthropic funders. The EPIC program is also active in Memphis City Schools, D.C. Public Schools, and Denver Public Schools. To date, EPIC has given over \$4.3 million in financial awards to educators in 68 schools nationwide.

A complete list of the 21 award-winning schools is attached to this release. Information specific to the EPIC program and the National Charter School Consortium, including a full list of participating schools, can be found on the EPIC Website, www.nlms.org/epic.jsp. Additional information on New Leaders for New Schools can be found at www.nlms.org.

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EPIC Award-winning Charter Schools for 2008-2009

Lighthouse Community Charter High School – Oakland, CA
Monarch Academy, Aspire Public Schools – Oakland, CA

Alliance, College-Ready Academy High School #4 – Los Angeles, CA
Alliance, Gertz-Ressler High School – Los Angeles, CA
Centennial College Preparatory Academy, Aspire Public Schools – Huntington Park, CA
Synergy Charter Academy – Los Angeles, CA
West Denver Preparatory Charter School – Denver, CO
E. L. Haynes Public Charter School – Washington, DC
The Charter School of Excellence – Fort Lauderdale, FL
Boston Preparatory Charter Public School – Hyde Park, MA
Boston Collegiate Charter School – Dorchester, MA
Community Day Charter Public School – Lawrence, MA
MATCH Charter Public School – Boston, MA
Prospect Hill Academy, Upper School – Cambridge, MA
Roxbury Preparatory Charter School – Roxbury, MA
City Charter High School – Pittsburgh, PA
Mastery Charter School – Lenfest Campus – Philadelphia, PA
Mastery Charter School – Shoemaker Campus – Philadelphia, PA
Propel McKeesport – McKeesport, PA
Higgs, Carter, King Gifted and Talented Charter Academy – San Antonio, TX
YES Prep North Central – Houston, TX

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