

**Excell Academy for Higher Learning
Charter School No. 4068**

ANNUAL REPORT

For the 2006-2007 Academic School Year

Submitted to

The Minnesota Department of Education

And

North Central University, Sponsor

October, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
I. School Mission Statement	3
II. Sponsor Information	4
III. Governance	4
IV. Teaching Staff	5
V. Student Background/Demographics	6
VI. Program Successes and Best Practices	7
VII. Program Challenges	9
VIII. Accountability Data from Reporting Year	10
IX. Other School Accountability Measures	15
X. All Academic Goals for the Upcoming Year	16
XI. Other Student/School Goals for Upcoming Year	16
XII. State Report Card	17
XIII. School Admissions Policies/Procedures	17

Introduction

We are proud to submit to the Minnesota Department of Education and our sponsor, North Central University, the sixth Annual Report of Excell Academy for Higher Learning, Charter School No. 4068.

Over the past six years Excell Academy has grown from 65 students in kindergarten through fourth grade to over 300 students in grades kindergarten through sixth. In addition, Excell has operated a successful kindergarten readiness (K-Readiness) preschool aged program for the past three years. With forty students enrolled in the K-Readiness program, Excell served over 340 children during the 2006-2007 school year.

Excell prides itself on the variety of educational support and (low cost / no cost) services that are made available for its families. Our Community Education program offers a before and after school program, kindergarten extended day, “Gimme-A-Break” school break care, “Summer S.M.A.R.T.S.”(Science Math Arts Reading/lit. Trips and Sun), K-Readiness, after school tutoring, after school athletics, as well as a variety of additional after school enrichment activities.

As we continue to grow and expand our educational program and services, Excell will add to its existing 25,000 square foot space, in order to meet our operational and facility needs. Excell Academy applied for and received a \$500,000 Minnesota Facilities Improvement Grant (MFIG). Excell Academy received the highest ranking grant score of 39 schools that submitted grant applications. The grant will promote student achievement and offer additional learning opportunities for Excell’s students and the community. The MFIG project features include a multipurpose / community room, a music and creative arts space, additional classrooms and a new welcoming entry way.

I. **Mission Statement:**

The mission of Excell Academy is to equip and prepare its learners for higher levels of education and to be positive productive members of society.

Excell Academy’s board of directors envision an excellent staff, excellent curriculum, and excellent parent and community involvement in the program.

Long Term Results envisioned by Excell Academy include:

- Students will create positive social change at home and abroad.
- Students will use the skills of critical thinking & innovation to solve problems and make effective decisions.
- Students are technologically competent and confident.

- Excell Academy will fully leverage local business partnerships to provide expertise, materials and volunteers.
- Excell Academy will grow to full enrollment of approximately 550 with a waiting list, by fall of '09.

II. Sponsor Information

Excell Academy for Higher Learning Charter School No. 4068 is sponsored by North Central University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Excell signed its first contract / charter with North Central in 2000. North Central has been supportive ever since. In 2004, without hesitation, North Central gladly renewed its charter with Excell. Once again this past spring, North Central renewed the charter agreement with Excell.

Over the past five years, a sponsor representative or sponsor liaison has attended Excell Academy's board meeting regularly. They have been supportive in giving advice and assistance in Excell's educational program as well as school organization operations. In addition, this past year North Central has sent student teachers to Excell in past years, and plans to do so again. Excell Academy's sponsor liaison is Ms. Sharon Connor. Sharon can be contacted at North Central's Education Department, 612-343- 4737 or by email Sharon.connor@northcentral.edu.

III. Governance

According to Excell's proposal to the Minnesota Commissioner of Education, "Excell Academy will hold an election for new board members in the spring of the third year of operation" unless there are vacancies. The board of directors shall consist of not less than five and not more than nine members. The members shall consist of teachers, parents, community members and non-teaching staff members of the academy. The board requested and was granted a waiver from the commissioner of the department of education in which Excell's board of directors may include less than a majority of classroom teachers. Excell's board consists of a combination of teacher / employees, community members, and parents of students. The academy most recently held board elections in November of 2006, for three positions. Two new members, Christiana Brownell and Dexter Phillips were elected to the Board in November 2006, and one member, Faye Holland, was elected for another term. Also, Tami Rogan resigned from the Board in October. Aside from these changes, Board membership was stable. See the below table for details on board composition during 2006-07.

Excell Academy Board members, 2006-07

Name	Date Elected	Position	Affiliation	Contact Info	Date Term Ends/Status
Christiana Brownell	11/30/06	Member	Parent		Nov. 2009
Candace Dunbar	11/17/05	Vice Chair		cdunbar@excellacademy.org	Nov. 2008
Erika Hawley	11/17/05	Member	Teacher	erikahawley@hotmail.com	Nov. 2008
Aaron Hjermstad	5/27/04	Treasurer	Teacher	mrhjermstad@yahoo.com	Nov. 2007
Faye Holland	11/30/06	Secretary	Staff	fholland@excellacademy.org	Nov. 2009
Nekima Levy-Pounds	11/17/05	Member	Community Rep	nvlevypounds@stthomas.edu	Nov. 2008
Dexter Phillips	11/30/06	Member	Community Rep	DPhillips@FDG-Advisors.com	Nov. 2009
Tami Rogan	11/17/05	Member	Community Rep		Oct. 2006
Dr. Tom Williams	5/27/04	Chair	Parent	pastor@mightyfortress.net	Nov. 2007
Jennifer Zainuddin	11/17/05	Member	Teacher	jenniferalvin@yahoo.com	Nov. 2008

IV. Teaching Staff Information

Licensed Teachers serving at Excell Academy during 2006-07 were as shown in the table below.

Excell Academy Teachers, 2006-07		
Teacher Name	Grade Level / Area	File Folder #
Laura Kinsfogel	Pre-K Teacher	424515
Sarah Kirby	Pre-K Teacher	402909
Megan Hjermstad	Kindergarten Teacher	383150
Melissa Lundgren	Kindergarten Teacher	429090
Lindsey Mohamed	Kindergarten Teacher	423468
Amy Whitmore	Kindergarten Teacher	422445
Charles Barton	1 st Grade Teacher	418723
Emily Jakola	1 st Grade Teacher	424154
Bethany Theobald	1 st Grade Teacher	380456
Melissa Galbreath	2 nd Grade Teacher	415045
Jennifer Zainuddin	2 nd Grade Teacher	421882
Natalie Dougherty	3 rd Grade Teacher	417411
Dennis Biljan	3 rd Grade, late spring	422509
Kim Reiersen	3 rd Grade Teacher	421537

Excell Academy Teachers, 2006-07

Teacher Name	Grade Level / Area	File Folder #
Erika Hawley	4 th Grade Teacher	407314
Steven Williams	5 th Grade Teacher	383337
Jami Eilers	6 th Grade Teacher	428735
Stephanie (Stiles) Champ	In-house sub Teacher	416094
Judi Ford	Music Teacher	431306
Aaron Hjermstad	Physical Ed. Teacher	396022
Nancy Young	Special Education teacher	396012

Natalie Dougherty left on maternity leave late spring and was replaced for the remainder of the year by Denny Biljan. All other teachers were at Excell for the whole school year.

Three teachers (Natalie Dougherty, Charles Barton and Melissa Galbreath) did not return for 2007-08. For fall 2007, Jami Eilers moved from 6th grade to 2nd grade; Lindsey Mohamed moved from K to 2nd; and Steven Williams moved from 5th to 6th. In addition, new teachers were hired for first, third, fourth, and fifth grades.

V. Student Background/Demographics

The 2005-2006 school year was Excell Academy's sixth year of operation. The majority of our students live in the northwest suburbs of Minneapolis. These cities include Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Maple Grove, Plymouth, Crystal, Robbinsdale, New Hope, Coon Rapids and Fridley. A small percentage lives in north Minneapolis.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, Excell served more than 300 students, in kindergarten through sixth grades. The table below summarizes the school's growth over the past three years, as well as other factors pertaining to the demographics of the student body. Figures are based on Minnesota Department of Education reports drawn from what schools report at the beginning of October.

Excell Academy Student Body, 2004-2007			
	2004-2005	2005-06	2006-07
Total enrollment, fall	189	259	287
Gender			
Male	39%	40%	47%
Female	61%	60%	53%
Ethnicity			
African-American	93%	95%	94%
Caucasian	4%	3%	2%
Hispanic	-	1%	3%
Asian or Native American	4%	1%	1%
Eligible for free or reduced-cost meal	82%	73%	80%
Receiving special education services	7%	7%	7%

VI. Program Successes (Best Practices)

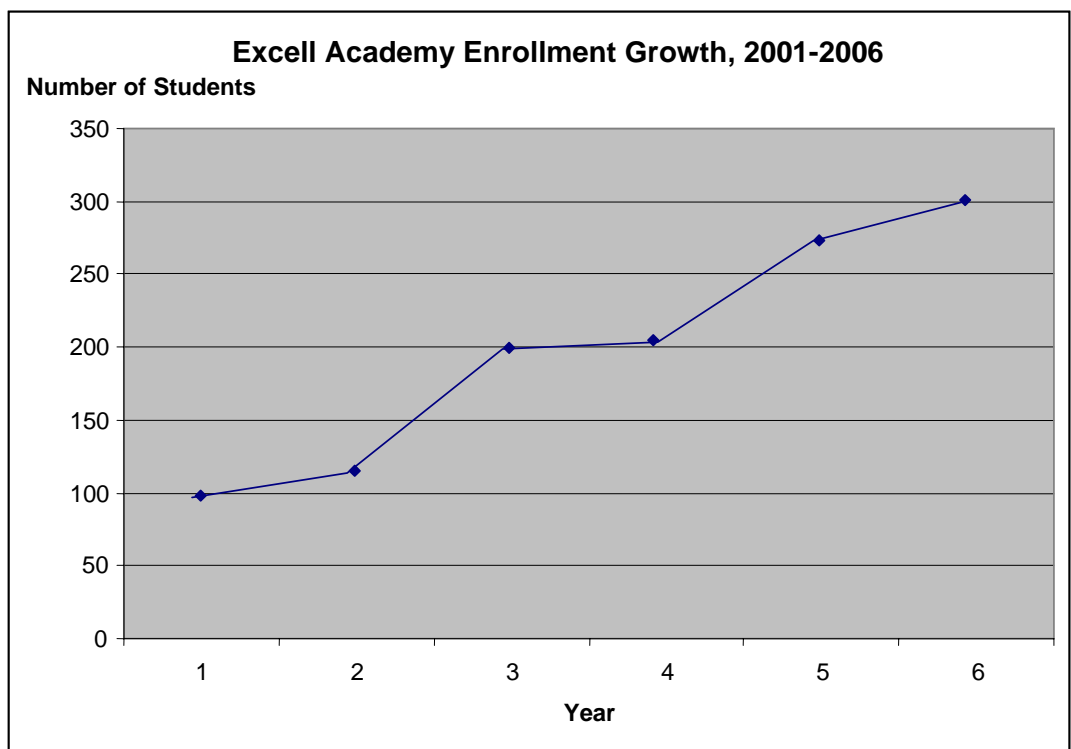
Program Successes include more involvement in Community Service Projects. Community events planned or completed during 2006-07 included:

- Charter School Athletics League
- Field trip to local airport
- Study of Africa and their ancestry
- Local Library
- Feed the Starving Children
- Book Fair
- Read to Succeed Night
- Local Press Conference for Facility Grant
- Toys for Tots for the needy
- Second Harvest Heartland
- Sun Post featured teacher (Zainuddin) for grant trip to Japan and school for Facility Grant
- Zainuddin grant trip to South America.
- Participated in MN House of Rep and Senate for Humanities Commission and Charter Schools funding
- MN Humanities Commission partnership
- LEAD for Charters
- Fund Raisers
- Summer SMARTS
- Summer Community Food Program
- Junior Achievement
- Box Tops/Milktops/Soup Labels
- Jump Rope for Heart

- Recycling Trash Clean Up
- Cards for Soldiers
- Walk for Education
- Heifer International
- Toys for Tots

In addition the Nash-Finch company donated over 3,000 books to Excell Academy and gave away brand new custom made bikes to 30 of our students to encourage community service learning and to promote reading.

Enrollment continued to grow in 2006-07, servicing over 300 students. This continues a long-term trend, as shown in the table below:



During 2006-07 Excell Academy was granted a \$500,000 federal facilities improvement grant. The Facilities Renovation Grant Project will promote student achievement and offer additional learning opportunities for Excell's students and the community. Project features include:

- Multipurpose / Community Room
- Music and Creative Arts Space
- Additional classrooms / Da Vinci Learning Studios
- New Welcoming Entry Way

More information and opportunities to support this project can be found on our website, www.excellacademy.org.

Another one of Excell Academy's "successes" is our fiscal management and student enrollment. We have earned the MDE Finance Award for the past two years, as well as have had "clean" audits. Our school's financial position is strong and its history is reflective of sound financial practices, long range planning and implementation of the School Board policies. The Board has planned for adequate cash flow and flexibility in the implementation of the operations budget through their policy to establish an undesignated fund balance reserve. In addition, the Board continues to discuss the sustainability of the organization and has provided resources to be used for implementation of cost effective projects that will provide long term learning opportunities and promote student achievement. At June 30, 2008, the School's Fund Balance is expected to be at \$420,000. This Fund Balance is reflective of successful planning for Fy08 where enrollment is expected to increase 35 students, instructional services are to be enhanced and the facilities renovation project is scheduled for completion.

VII. Program Challenges

A. Increase in students referred to the Quiet Room

There was an increase in the proportion of students referred to the Quiet Room, for behavior issues, during the 2006-07 school year. Data are shown below, in the Accountability Data section. All classes report that teachers are working on citizenship, peace building and social skills with the students. Teachers are also collaborating and communicating with parents regularly. Responsive Classroom strategies are also being implemented by most teachers. All teachers have been trained in Responsive Classroom as well as other conflict resolution and effective classroom management strategies for the 2007-2008 school year.

Teachers' knowledge of schoolwide discipline policies and procedures were thoroughly addressed in the "Implementing the Vision" mandatory workshops taught by the academy's Founder and Executive Director, Sabrina Williams. In addition, all teachers participated in classroom management, character education and cultural sensitivity training during teacher orientation weeks for 2007-2008.

B. Transportation

Although this area of school operation has always posed challenges, there has been a significant increase in resolving the student transportation issues. During the 06-07 school year we as a school planned with parent in getting students on the correct busses. The school has addressed the transportation company to insure that all drivers are well trained, prepared and familiar with the bus routes. The bus company is making efforts to increase safety, proficiency and parent satisfaction in transporting the students to and from school.

C. Parent Involvement

As noted in last year's Annual Report, Parent Involvement had always been considered a success area. However, as reported in 2005-2006, parent participation had begun to decline. In the 2005-2006 school year, only 15% of the 200 families participated, compared to at least 45% in previous years.

We are glad to report that parent participation increased during this reporting period. During the 2006-2007 school year, 44% of Excell's 242 families completed 20 or more volunteer hours. This increase was more vividly observed at Excell's special events. Excell had over 350 people / students and their families in attendance at our school Open House in September of 2006. There were well over 500 people in attendance at the both the winter and spring concerts. Standing room was limited. As we continue to effectively communicate with parents and involve the students, we expect to see a continual steady increase in family involvement.

VIII. Accountability Data from Reporting Year

Excell Academy had the following Academic goals for 2006-07:

Students will:

- (a) demonstrate at least one grade level of improvement in reading during each year of attendance. Reading growth will be measuring by the MAP test.
- (b) demonstrate at least one grade level of improvement in Math during each year of attendance. Math growth will be measured by the MAP test.

Student/School Goals for 2006-07 were as follows:

- 1) All students will achieve a level of personal development that is developmentally appropriate. Specifically, report cards will show an increase in students completing homework and following directions.

Measure used: Report card

- 2) At least 75% of students' K-6 will exhibit appropriate behavior during school hours over the course of the academic school year.

Measure used: Quiet room data 25% or less students will be referred to the “quiet room.

First, data pertaining to Excell Academy’s 2006-07 Academic Goals is reported, followed by data pertaining to the Student/School Goals.

Reading Results

This first Academic Goal stated that *students will demonstrate at least one grade level of improvement in reading during each year of attendance. Reading growth will be measured by the MAP test.*

Data submitted to the Excell Academy Board of Directors and sponsor representative on August 7, 2007, showed the following results from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in Reading:

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is the computerized version of the NWEA – Northwest Evaluation Assessment. This nationally norm-referenced standardize test assesses students at their achievement level and not necessarily at a particular grade level. Growth is determined by each individual student’s achievement score. A target growth number (for one year’s growth) is determined according to each individual’s score and achievement level.

Also, it is important to note that these data show students meeting or exceeding *target growth*, which is one year’s growth from the spring 2006 score. These data do not show or in no way indicates that students who did not meet one years growth is “*low*” or “*behind*” in their grade level. For example, a student could score above average on both the spring 2006 and spring 2007 test, but not meet their target growth score.

Spring 2006 – Spring 2007

Reading Grade Level Tested	Total # of Students	Count of Students w/ Valid Beg. And Ending Term Scores	% Met or Exceeded Target Growth	% of Students w/ Increased Scores
Second	*	*	*	*
Third	46	30	23.3% %	93.5%
Fourth	24	11	54.5%	82%
Fifth	19	10	20%	50%
Sixth	12	7	42.9%	86%

In addition, the August report to the Board and sponsor included student report card data showing that most students were meeting or exceeding grade level expectations in Reading during the 2006-07 school year:

Grade Level	# of students	Meeting or Exceeding Grade Level Expectations READING	
1	69	65	94%
2	45	34	75%
3	47	29	61%
4	24	15	62.5%
5	20	12	60%
6	12	10	83%

Reading	Developing +	Proficient	Meeting or Exceeding	% Meeting or Exceeding
Identifies letters and sounds	11	38	49	83%
Reads Words	27	15	42	71%

Key: Developing = Reads 5-9 words; Proficient = Reads 10 or more high frequency words (MN State Kindergarten Reading Standards)

According to kindergarten teachers' observations and reading curriculum assessments, ***at least 75% of all kindergarteners are able to read 50 or more high frequency words.***

Finally, we report spring 2007 results in Reading on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-II).

Excell Academy MCA Reading test results, 2007				
Grade	Percent of students scoring at level:			
	1	2	3	4
Grade 3 – total = 45 students ¹	9	5	20	11
Grade 4 – total = 24 students	8	3	7	6
Grade 5 – total = 17 students	5	5	5	2
Grade 6 – total = 12 students	1	3	5	3
Total = 98	23 (23%)	16 (16%)	37 (38%)	22 (22%)

¹ Total means total number of students enrolled at Excell Academy October 1, 2006, who took the MCA in the spring of 2007. In total, there were only three students who took the MCA Reading test who were *not* enrolled as of Oct. 1.

Mathematics Results

The second academic goal stated that *students will demonstrate at least one grade level of improvement in Math during each year of attendance. Math growth will be measured by the MAP test.*

MAP data in Mathematics, again based on the August 7, 2007 report to the Excell Academy Board and sponsor representative, show the following results:

Spring 2006 – Spring 2007

Math Grade Level Tested	Total # of Students	*Count of Students w/ Valid Beg. and Ending Term Scores	% Met or Exceeded Target Growth	% of Students w/ Increased Scores
Second	*	*	*	*
Third	46	32	41.35%	93.5%
Fourth	24	11	72.7%	91%
Fifth	20	11	45.5%	64%
Sixth	12	6	66.7%	100%

**No prior spring tests to compare. First year of MAP testing is at grade 2.*

In addition, the August report to the Board and sponsor included student report card data showing that most students were meeting or exceeding grade level expectations in Mathematics:

Grade Level	# of students	Meeting or Exceeding Grade Level Expectations MATH	
1	69	65	94%
2	45	33	73%
3	47	29	61%
4	24	14	58%
5	20	12	60%
6	12	9	75%

Kindergarten

59 Kindergarteners	Developing +	Proficient	Meeting or Exceeding	% Meeting or Exceeding
Overall Mathematics	10	32	50	84.7 %

Finally, we report spring 2007 results in Mathematics on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-II).

Excell Academy MCA Mathematics test results, 2007				
Grade	Percent of students scoring at level:			
	1	2	3	4
Grade 3 – total = 45 students ²	7	18	17	3
Grade 4 – total = 24 students	4	4	9	7
Grade 5 – total = 18 students	8	8	2	
Grade 6 – total = 12 students	4	1	7	
Total = 99 students	23 (23%)	31 (31%)	35 (35%)	10 (10%)

Personal and Social Development

The first Student/School Goal stated that *all students will achieve a level of personal development that is developmentally appropriate. Specifically, report cards will show an increase in students completing homework and following directions.*

The measure used was data on the extent to which there was an *increase* in students completing homework and following directions, from students' report cards. This data (summarized in the August 7, 2007 report to the Excell Academy Board and sponsor), showed the following:

Measure used: **Report Cards – Grades First - Sixth**

Personal and Social Development						
Grade	Increase in Completing Homework	+	-	Increase in Following Directions	+	-
First	9.4 %	√		9 %	√	
Second	7 %	√		7.3 %		√
Third	9 %	√		5%	√	
Fourth	6.5 %	√		0 % ³	*	
Fifth	3.5 %	√		6 %	√	
Sixth	9 %	√		15 %		√

² Total means the number of students enrolled at Excell Academy October 1, 2006, who took the MCA in the spring of 2007. In total, there were only three students who took the MCA Mathematics test who were *not* enrolled as of Oct. 1.

³ No change for fourth graders. All students started with perfect scores points in this area (*Follows Directions*) and all students maintained perfect scores throughout the school year; therefore, no increase or decrease.

Measure used: **Report Cards – Kindergarten “Personal Management”**

Personal Management	Organizes Materials	Follows Directions
Proficient	100%	97%

Student Behavior

The second Student/School goal stated that *at least 75% of students’ K-6 will exhibit appropriate behavior during school hours over the course of the academic school year.*

The measure to be used to show progress on this was Quiet Room data, with the target of 25% or less students being referred to the “quiet room” at any point during the school year. The below table summarizes referrals to the Quiet Room during 2006-07:

2006-07 Student Referrals		
Total enrollment = 321 students		
# of times referred	# of students	% referred
One time	49	15.3%
Four or more times	51	15.7%
Total: 1+ referrals	147	45.8%
Total: no referrals	174	54.2%

This shows that Excell Academy fell short on this Student Goal, with 45.8% of students referred to the Quiet Room at least once during the school year. This is a small increase over 2005-06, when 121 of 305 students or 39.7% were referred at least once during the year. Strategies in place to address the rise in Quiet Room referrals are noted above, in the Program Challenges section.

IX. Other School Accountability Measures

Community support for Excell Academy remained strong during 2006-07; see the many examples of community-based partners and activities engaged in, in the Program Successes/Best Practices section above. Also, there was a significant increase in parent involvement compared to the previous school year (addressed above in the Program Challenges section).

X. All Academic Goals for the Upcoming Year

Excell Academy established a four-year Strategic Plan in 2007, which included desired results for the 2007-08 school year. Academic Achievement targets for 2007-08 are:

- 80% of student body (excluding ELL students and students with an IEP) will demonstrate improvement in reading. Reading growth will be measured by the Report Card in K-6th (quarterly) and the MAP test for 3rd – 6th (annually).
- For those students not showing improvement in reading, a plan of action will be set in place to show quarterly progress.
- 80% of student body (excluding ELL students and students with an IEP) will demonstrate improvement in math. Math growth will be measured by the Report Card in K-6th (quarterly) and the MAP test for 3rd – 6th (annually).
- For those students not showing improvement in math, a plan of action will be set in place to show quarterly progress.
- The school will meet Adequate Yearly Progress in reading and math.
- Quarterly update on achievement of goals by IEP and ELL students, with a plan of action for ensuring that all IEP and ELL goals are met.

XI. Other Student/School Goals for the Upcoming Year

In addition to the Academic Achievement targets, Excell Academy's Strategic Plan articulated targets in Personal and Social Development, Community Interaction, and Cultural Diversity:

Personal and Social Development

- All students will achieve a level of personal and social development that is developmentally appropriate. Quarterly, 80% of students will show a plus on report cards re: homework and following directions.
- There will be a decrease in % of students being sent to quiet room. Measure: Teaching staff use discipline policies and classroom management practices.

Community Interaction

- All students will have an opportunity to benefit from community partnerships and community involvement annually, measured by an annual record of events.
- All students will have an opportunity to benefit from community/cultural events annually. This will be measured by an annual record of events.
- All students grades pre-K - 6 will participate in a service learning project to enhance citizenship skills. Measured by an annual student survey.

Cultural Diversity

- Excell Academy will create a culturally sensitive and comfortable learning environment in which students are free to express themselves intellectually, creatively, and affectively. This will be measured by an annual student survey.
- Staff will create an environment where individual and cultural differences in teaching and learning styles are acknowledged. This will be measured by the annual student survey.
- Evidence of creating a racially, culturally, and economically diverse student body, measured by an increase of non Native African and African American students until goal is maintained, as measured by demographic data.
- Evidence of creating a racially, culturally and economically diverse staff/volunteer population, measured by implementing strategies (marketing & recruitment) to recruit staff/volunteers of color.
- Excell Academy will create a culturally diverse curriculum that reflects the culture of racial and economic diversity of the global community, measured by examples of curriculum.

XII. State Report Card

Excell Academy's 2007 State Report Card is available online at <http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard/2007/RCF406807010.pdf> and will be attached to the print copy of this report.

EXCELL Academy For Higher Learning (2007-2008)

Enrollment Form

(PLEASE PRINT)

Date of Application _____ Desired Date of Enrollment _____

Child's Name (Last, First, Middle)		
Family Situation		
Who does the child live with? Mother _____ Father _____ Both Parents _____ Other _____		
Identifying Information		
A) Mother's (Guardian) Name	Home Telephone Number ()	Cell/Pager Number ()
Address (street, City, State, Zip Code)		
Place of Employment	Work Hours and Phone Number	
B) Father's (Guardian) Name	Home Telephone Number ()	Cell/Pager Number ()
Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)		
Place of Employment	Work Hours and Phone Number	
EMERGENCY CONTACTS (OTHER THAN PARENT(S) OR A DOCTOR)		
Name	Telephone Number(s) ()	
Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)		
PERSON(S) AUTHORIZED TO PICK UP CHILD FROM SCHOOL		
Name		
Name		
PERSON(S) UNAUTHORIZED TO PICK UP CHILD FROM SCHOOL		
Name		
Name		
EDUCATIONAL HISTORY		
How did you find out about Excell Academy?	Grade entering September 2007?	
Previous School Attended (Name, Address, Phone)		
TO BE COMPLETED BY EXCELL ACADEMY ADMINISTRATION		
Admission date	Waiting List Date	
Discharge Date / Reason?		