

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

ANNUAL REPORT

For the 2009-2010 Academic School Year

**Submitted to
the Minnesota Department of Education
and
North Central University, Authorizer**

October 1, 2010

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Introduction

We are proud to submit the ninth Annual Report of Excell Academy for Higher Learning, Charter School No. 4068. The purpose of this report is to record and report the Academy's programs, operations, growth, successes and challenges from year to year.

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

Excell academy will achieve its mission by identifying, nurturing, and developing its learners' academic gifts, talents and creativity. With the belief that every student is capable of pursuing an achievement at a higher level, Excell Academy offers exceptional learning experiences and quality curricula to foster the learners' fullest potential.

Our Vision:

Excell Academy for Higher Learning's Board of Directors envision excellent staff, excellent curriculum, excellent student body, and excellent parent and community involvement in the program. In addition, Excell Academy's goals include providing:

- Our students with learning opportunities and academic experiences which normally are not made available to them;
- High standards and high expectations for all our learners
- Support in academic, social and emotional issues which are specific to the learners and their families
- A culturally comfortable learning environment in which students are free to express themselves intellectually, creatively and affectively
- An environment where individual and cultural differences in teaching and learning styles are acknowledged
- A racially, culturally and economically diverse student body
- A socially and academically responsive curriculum, in which problem solving and critical thinking apply to the culture and history of diverse groups
- Content about minority groups integrated as a regular integral part of the curriculum "Real-Life" learning experiences
- A "continuous progress" system for individualized learning
- Multi assessments to monitor student achievement
- Staff members who are active and proactive in seeking professional development to work effectively with diverse populations of students
- Extended-day enrichment activities and homework assistance
- Parental involvement in training and development
- Opportunities for community partnerships and other types of community involvement.

Over the past nine years Excell Academy has grown from 65 students in kindergarten through fourth grade to more than 450 students in grades kindergarten through eighth. In addition, Excell has operated a successful kindergarten readiness (K-Readiness) preschool aged program for the past five years.

In spring of 2009, the Minnesota Department of Education approved a second site for Excell Academy to continue expanding enrollment and to house its Middle School. The 2009-2010 school year was the first year of the second campus and the first year of graduating 8th graders at Excell Academy. Excell served over 85 students grades 6th – 8th on this 2nd campus in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.

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, and after school athletics, as well as a variety of additional after school enrichment activities. Excell also hosts a "Sunrise Reading" program. The "Sunrise Reading" is hosted by teachers, administration, students as well as parent and community members, who read to students daily for 15 – 20 minutes before the school day begins.

School Governance

2009-2010 School Year Excell Academy for Higher Learning School Board

The table below contains information for ALL board members.

2009-10 Election Date: November 2009

2010-11 Anticipated Election Date: May 2011

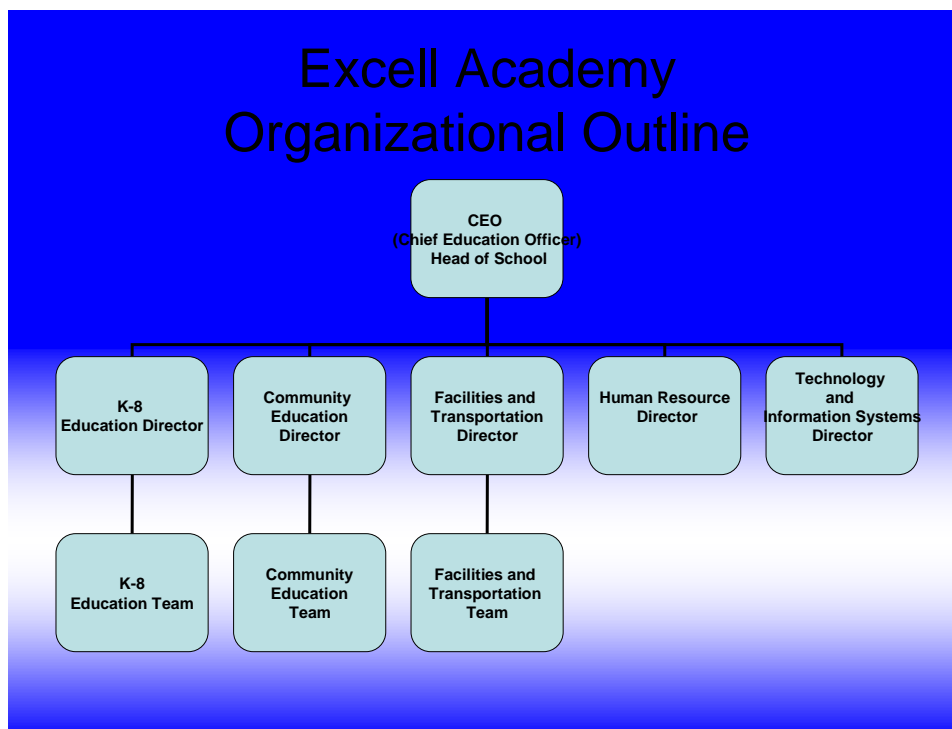
Name	Board Position	Group (if teacher, file folder #)	Date Seated	Phone Number	E-Mail Address	Member Meeting Attendance Rate
Candace Dunbar	Chair	Community	11/07	763 742-6782	cdunbar@excellacademy.org	100%
Aaron Hjermstad	Vice Chair	Teacher/Staff; #396022	11/08	612 987-7320	ahjermstad@excellacademy.org	98%
Dexter Phillips	Treasurer	Community	11/08	651 294-7936	DPhillips@FDG-Advisors.com	98%
Faye Holland	Secretary	Community	11/08	763 742-6781	fholland@excellacademy.org	100%
Steven Williams	member	Teacher/staff; #383337	11/07	612 237-1659	stevenwilliams@excellacademy.org	95%
Casey Morrissette	member	Parent	11/09	763 391-9233	Casey.morrissette@usps.gov	90%
Demyko Jackson	member	Parent	11/09	763 377-5776	jacksondemyko@district279.org	90%
Jackie Palmer	member	Teacher/staff	11/09	763 742-6734	jpalmer@excellacademy.org	100%
Richard Montgomery	member	Parent	7/10		Montgomery316@hotmail.com	N/A

Three new Board members were elected in the fall of 2009 (seated November). There was an additional parent member at the beginning of the year, who quit attending meetings and was

dismissed from the Board, to be replaced by Richard Montgomery (appointed by the Board to serve out the term which will end June 30, 2011).

School Management and Administration

Excell Academy is led by an Executive Leadership Team consisting of its Executive Director/Chief Education Officer, the Principal/K-8 Education Director, the Community Education Director, the Human Resource Director, the Facility Operations and Transportation Director, and the Technology/Information Systems Director.



2009-10 Excell Academy for Higher Learning School Management and Faculty Information

This table contains information for all members of the school management/administrative team (first six lines) and also includes faculty employed by the school that did not serve as a classroom teacher

Excell Academy Administration and Non-Licensed Staff					
Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Years Employed by the School	Left During 09/10	Not Returning 10/11
Sabrina Williams	N/A	Executive Director	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doug Seiler	327947	Principal	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cassandra Payne	N/A	Human Res. Director	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cecilia Willis	N/A	Community Ed. Director	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candace Dunbar	N/A	Facility Operations & Transportation Director	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Excell Academy Administration and Non-Licensed Staff					
Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Years Employed by the School	Left During 09/10	Not Returning 10/11
Joko Bryant	N/A	Technology Director	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thomas Anderson		PT Admin. Assistant	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nortarsha Ashford		Pre-K Education Assistant (EA)	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lucille Baugh		EA	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D'LaBrea Blakely		Special Ed. EA	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brittany Bryant		Pre-K EA	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Desmond Bryant		Special ed. EA	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eric Bryant		After-school Support	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adela Costilla		Social Worker	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Donovan Ford		Maintenance	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Liliana Garcia		Kindergarten Receptionist	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shalonda Gordon		Executive Admin. Assistant	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stephen Grant		EA/After-school Support	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiffany Grant		Pre-K Educator	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valera Hachey		EA	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faye Holland		Parent Liaison	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thomas Isreal		Special Ed. EA	<1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ishabor Makvandi		EA	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Abraham Martinez		Pre-K EA	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jacqueline Palmer		School Secretary	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tonya Penister		Student Support	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teareather Robinson		Registrar	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laura Roust		Nurse	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Karen Stovall		Grant Writer	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lynn Walton		Behavior Int. Specialist	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candace Willis		EA/Lunchroom Support	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jill Wujak		Library Support	<1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

During the 2009-2010 school year, the Board of Directors of Excell Academy for Higher Learning sought assistance from a Professional Human Resource Consultant to develop a professional development plan for the Chief Education Officer (Executive Director). The Board's Executive Director Review Committee was assigned the task of working with the HR consultant to finalize the plan. Stage 1 of the CEO professional development plan, Goal Setting, is to be implemented during the first quarter. During December there will be a Mid-year Check-in Conference in which the CEO reports to the Board. By May a Formal Performance Evaluation of the CEO will be completed. The Board's Executive Director Review Committee will oversee the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the CEO professional development plan.

Areas of focus, on which the CEO will report to the Board, include the following:

- Visionary and Inspirational Leadership
 - Executive Leadership Team Assessments and their Department Assessments
 - Handbooks Updates
 - Goals
- Academic Leadership, Accountability, and Outcomes
 - AYP Status

- MAP data
- MCA data
- Academic Goals

- Fiscal Leadership, Accountability and Outcomes
 - MDE Finance Award
 - Long term Financial Projections
 - Annual Audit

- Board, Authorizer, Community and Other Stakeholder Relationships
 - Updates and status of new Authorizer
 - Partnerships
 - Grants
 - Parent Involvement Stats
 - Goals

- School Culture and Climate
 - Staff Focus Group results
 - Staff and student survey results
 - Goals

- Talent Investment and Leadership Development
 - Staff turnover statistics
 - Professional Develop data and tracking
 - Goals

Teaching Faculty Information

2009-10 Excell Academy for Higher Learning Teaching Faculty Information

This table contains information for ALL teachers employed by the school or providing services contractually (e.g., special education teacher, reading specialist, speech therapist).

Excell Academy Teachers, 2009-10				
Name	File Folder Number	Assignment/ Subject	Left During 09/10	Not Returning 10/11
Arundel, Hillary	424450	Music Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balvin, Justin	434821	Middle school Global Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biljan, Dennis	422509	Elementary Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dahmes, Benjamin	436873	Special Ed Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dalquist Swantak, Amanda	449237	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dombek, Pricilla	442963	Special Ed Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dougherty, Natalie	417411	Early Intervention Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Doyle, Leigh	394157	Curriculum Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dranchak, Jolanda	440477	Art Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Findsen, Kelly	441566	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finke, Ryan	435006	Middle school- Language Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gault, Kelley	433279	Classroom Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ghastin, Amanda	437181	Classroom Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Excell Academy Teachers, 2009-10				
Name	File Folder Number	Assignment/ Subject	Left During 09/10	Not Returning 10/11
Griffith, Rachael	395114	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hjermstad, Aaron	396022	Phy Ed Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hjermstad, Megan	383150	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jackola, Emily	424154	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
James, Julie	435058	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kinsfogel, Laura	424515	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirby, Sarah	402909	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Larson, Erika	407314	Mentor Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mische, Frederich	329669	Middle school- Science	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Norton, Katherine	411227	Reading Specialist/Title I	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orvis, Katherine	369100	Classroom Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peterson, Emily	442450	Special Ed Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reierson, Kimberly	421537	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schooley, Melissa	429090	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wasieleski, Evonne	333104	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wentzell, Matthew	442275	ESL/Title I Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whitmore, Amy	422445	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Williams, Crystal	430489	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Williams, Steven	383337	Middle school - Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Woodbury, Jay	445705	Classroom Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Young, Nancy	445705	Special Ed Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

School Admissions and Enrollment

Excell Academy enrolls students on a “first come first served basis.” After all classes in a specific grade level have been filled to capacity, the registrar places any additional enrollees on a waiting list. When a “slot” opens, the students are selected by method of lottery. Enrollment forms are available at the school’s website: <http://www.excellacademy.org/>; and select Excell Forms. Enrollment of students at Excell Academy has steadily grown, from less than 100 students in the school’s first two years of operation, to more than 400 the past two years. The chart below provides details on student population over the past three years, and projections for 2010-11.

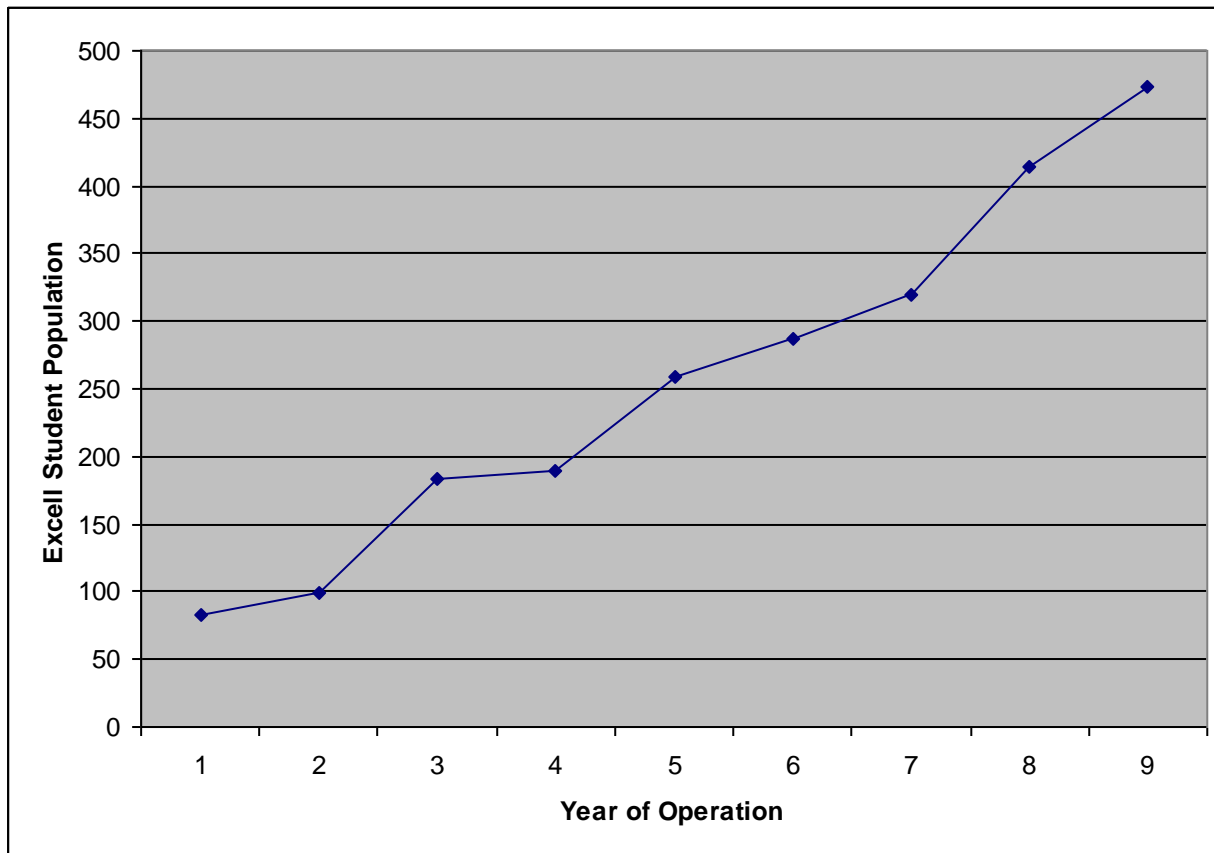
Student Enrollment and Attrition Rates

This table identifies the number of students enrolled at the school during the 2008-09, 2009-10, and estimated 2010-2011 enrollment. Data is based on October 1 Average Daily Membership (ADM).

In addition to the K-8 students, there has been a pre-K program at Excell Academy since the fall of 2004. This is a fee-based, half-day and full-day program which serves 40 students (there were spaces for 20 the first year, expanding to 40 in 2005-06). The preschool program has been fully subscribed since it was established.

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Growth Rate ¹
2007-08	50	71	66	48	43	24	18			320	11%
2008-09	82	59	73	65	51	42	22	20		414	29%
2009-10	73	72	63	64	64	49	46	21	22	474	14%
Estimated 2010-11										525	11%

The graph below shows how Excell’s student population has grown steadily over its nine years of operation.



Academic Program

Academic Program Overview

Excell Academy provides a program addressing academic and social education, as summarized below:

- Academic and Social Education
 - Core Knowledge Sequence (Global Awareness)

¹ Calculated based on change from 10/1 of the previous school year to 10/1 of the reported school year, divided by the previous year’s figure.

- Responsive Classroom (Integration of Academics and Social learning)
- Saxon Math (Concept Development by problem solving)
- SRA Direct Instruction (Reading for Mastery)
- Reading Street (Guided Reading with Literature)
- Physical Education (Fitness and Health for Life skill building)
- Arts (Music, Band, Performance, Visual and Discipline Based Art)
- Special Education Services
- School wide Title I programming
- English Language Learning
- Brain Development
 - Critical and Higher Level thinking
 - Creativity development
- Social Skills Development
 - Conflict Resolution skill building
 - Problem Solving

There is also a community education component:

- Community Education
 - Early Childhood – Kindergarten Readiness
 - Before and After School Care
 - Kindergarten –aged extended day program
 - After School Athletics
 - Tutoring
 - Summer S.M.A.R.T.S.
 - Free Summer Meals service program for community children
 - Community Partners programs
 - Brooklyn Park Area Athletics
 - Christ Triumphant Ministries
 - Brooklyn Park Police Department
 - Mighty Fortress International
 - Girls and Boys Scouts of America

School Improvement Efforts

Implementation of schoolwide strategies for improvement was summarized for the Excell Academy Board at the end of August, 2010, as follows:

- All classes report that teachers are working on citizenship, peace building and social skills with the students. Teachers are also working with and communicating with parents regularly. Responsive Classroom strategies are also being implemented by teachers. Students with significant concerns have been referred to the Student Teacher Support Team².
- Response to Intervention (RtI) assessments and reading intervention strategies were implemented this year to respond to students who are low and/or falling behind in basic reading and language skills. Students kindergarten through grade 8 were

² Students who are having difficulty are referred to the STST before being assessed to qualify for special education services. The team, which includes several teachers and the principal, meets to identify interventions which can be put in place to help a student catch up to his or her peers.

assessed using the “DIBELS” test. Students who were identified with needs, received tutoring accordingly.

During the summer of 2010, Excell Academy established a schoolwide theme for the new school year, of *Excelling in Accountability and Teamwork*. The aim is to raise standards of excellence and accountability for the entire Excell community (leadership, administration, teachers, support staff, students, and parents) in an effort to improve academically and socially. Specific strategies to improve academic achievement and meet AYP targets in Reading and Mathematics are described below, in the Program Challenges section. The Accountability Plan has been reviewed with all staff and has been shown in summary form to parents; it is being finalized as of September, 2010. The plan will include these schoolwide Accountability Standards:

- *School leadership* will be accountable for demonstrating more effective communication with families and staff as well as maintaining a school culture of high standards and Excellence.
- *Teachers* will be accountable for utilizing and demonstrating more effective classroom management and instructional practices to foster a learning environment of high expectations, safety and enjoyment.
- *Support staff* will be accountable by being proactive in assisting teachers and students in any professional way that will contribute to the academic and social success of each student.
- *Students* will be accountable to come to school prepared to learn, ready to work hard and do their best, as well as respect the right of others to learn.
- *Parents / Families* will be accountable to support the development of the academic and social success of their child/ren by sending them to school prepared to learn (*rested, on time, dressed appropriately*), and working with the school to celebrate their child/ren’s successes and to address their challenges.

Academic Goals and Data

Excell Academy had five Academic Goals for 2009-10. The goals are listed below, followed by applicable assessment data pertaining to each goal.

- *Goal #1 – number of students in 3rd – 8th grade who score proficient on the math and reading MCA will increase by 10% from the 2008-2009 year to the 2009-2010 year.*

Comparison of Spring 2009 to Spring 2010 MCA-II results from Excell Academy grades 3-8 students shows that the proportion of students scoring proficient in math declined slightly, while the proportion scoring proficient in reading increased slightly:

- Mathematics MCA, 2009: 31% proficient (57 of 186 students who tested and had valid scores)
- Mathematics MCA, 2010: 29% proficient (71 of 247 students tested/valid scores)
- Reading MCA, 2009: 39% proficient (71 of 184 students tested/valid scores)
- Reading MCA, 2010: 43% proficient (107 of 249 students tested/valid scores)

- *Goal #2 – The percentage of 2nd – 8th grade students scoring in the average or high category in the Reading, Math and Language Usage portions of the MAP test will increase by 10% from fall 2009 to spring 2010.*

Comparison of fall and spring MAP test scores shows that the proportion of students scoring in the average or high categories increased slightly in Mathematics and Language Usage, though not in Reading:

- Excell Academy percent average/high on Reading MAP, fall to spring: 38.1% - 37.8% (decline of 0.3%)
- Excell Academy percent average/high on Mathematics MAP, fall to spring: 44% - 47.6% (gain of 3.6%)
- Excell Academy percent average/high on Language Usage MAP, fall to spring: 38.9% - 42.6% (gain of 3.7%)

- *Goal #3 – The percentage of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade students scoring in the Low Risk category in Oral Reading Fluency on the DIBELS assessment will increase by 10% from fall 2009 to spring 2010.*

Analysis of Grades 1-3 students' DIBELS assessment results showed that the proportion of students in the Low Risk category in Oral Reading Fluency increased from 24% in the fall (42 of 177 students) to 31% in the spring (55 of 177 students).

- *Goal #4 – The percentage of K students scoring in the Low Risk category in Phonemic Segmentation Fluency on the DIBELS assessment will be 45%, based on spring assessments.*

Analysis of spring DIBELS results for Kindergartners showed that 18% (11 of 60 students) scored in the Low Risk category in Phonemic Segmentation Fluency. Data was not collected for 13 Kindergartners, however.

- *Goal #5 – The percentage of 4th – 8th grade students scoring in the Low Risk category in Oral Reading Fluency on the DIBELS assessment will be 45%, based on spring assessments.*

Analysis of spring DIBELS results for 4th-8th graders showed that 52% (97 of 186 students) scored in the Low Risk category in Oral Reading Fluency.

These results show that, for Goals 1-4, Excell Academy did not meet its targets in 2009-10. School leadership, staff and the Board have met to discuss the challenges the school faces and ways to improve results for all students. These discussions led to the establishment of a schoolwide Accountability Plan for 2010-11 and provision for additional assistance for students who are behind academically. Response to Intervention (RTI) was implemented as a new schoolwide initiative in 09-10, with all students assessed; services were provided to specific students who needed help. Also, an English Language Learner teacher has been hired for the new year, as this population has increased substantially at Excell. The *School Improvement Efforts* section and

the *School Goals and Data* sections of this report include further descriptions of initiatives being undertaken to improve the school.

Additional Academic Data

A more in-depth look at fall-to-spring MAP results shows that most students made progress from fall to spring on the MAP tests in Reading and Mathematics, but the amount of growth was less than the norm-group average. This was particularly true in Reading, where the average fall-spring RIT score gain for students tested at Excell was less in each grade tested, than the national average.

Excell Academy 2009-10 Fall to Spring Measures of Academic Progress Results: Reading							
Grade	Students Tested F+S	Mean Fall RIT	Mean Spring RIT	Mean Growth	Mean Growth Target	Growth Index ³	Number of Students meeting target ⁴
2	53	161.2	176.2	15.0	17.9	-2.9	22/53 (42%)
3	52	179.3	189.8	10.5	11.5	-1.1	29/52 (56%)
4	58	189.2	192.2	3.0	8.6	-5.7	23/58 (40%)
5	44	198.7	201.4	2.7	6.1	-3.3	12/44 (27%)
6	38	201.1	206.0	4.9	5.8	-0.9	19/38 (50%)
7	19	210.2	213.9	3.7	4.7	-1.0	6/19 (32%)
8	19	216.2	217.4	1.2	3.6	-2.4	8/19 (42%)

Excell Academy 2009-10 Fall to Spring Measures of Academic Progress Results: Math							
Grade	Students Tested F+S	Mean Fall RIT	Mean Spring RIT	Mean Growth	Mean Growth Target	Growth Index	Number of Students meeting target
2	54	168.0	179.0	11.0	15.6	-4.5	12/54 (22%)
3	52	183.8	198.1	14.3	11.4	2.9	36/52 (69%)
4	35	191.8	202.6	10.8	9.4	1.4	19/35 (54%)
5	22	207.2	214.9	7.7	7.6	0	14/22 (64%)
6	38	208.3	214.0	5.7	7.1	-1.5	14/38 (37%)
7	18	218.2	224.8	6.6	6.4	0.3	9/18 (50%)
8	21	226.0	227.8	1.8	4.9	-3.2	8/21 (38%)

Each quarter when preparing report cards for their students, teachers at Excell Academy determine, through their assessment of students, whether they are making the expected progress in math and reading (as well as social skills and homework/following directions). Judgment of whether a student is making the expected progress is based on assessments embedded in the curriculum (e.g., Direct Instruction), observation, and teacher-designed assessments. When these results from student report cards were analyzed at year's end (comparing first to second quarter; second to third quarter; and third to fourth quarter), the data showed that most students made progress, though proportion making the expected improvement was less at the middle-school level.

³ Compares average improvement of Excell Academy students to average fall-to-spring improvement of all students in the MAP norming group – a positive number means that on average Excell students in that grade improved more than the norm-group.

⁴ Growth targets are defined such that overall, one-half of students meet or exceed the growth target – so if more than 50% of students in a group are meeting the target, the school is outperforming the average.

Excell Academy Student Quarter-to-Quarter Academic Growth per Report Cards		
Grade Level	% of Students Growth in Math	% Students Growth in Reading
Kindergarten	100%	100%
First	91%	95%
Second	80%	80%
Third	89%	93%
Fourth	79%	87%
Fifth	87%	89%
Sixth	50%	61%
Seventh	72%	62%
Eighth	53%	47%

In addition to the Reading and Mathematics-related goals noted above, Excell Academy continued to focus on students' personal and social development. The goal in this area was: *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.*

If a student consistently turns in homework and follows directions, the teacher puts a "plus" on their report card for these areas at the end of each quarter. Personal and social development data from 2009-10 student report cards (averaged over the four quarters) showed that over 80% of students in grades K-5 earned a plus on their report cards re homework and following directions:

- Kindergarten: 100%
- First grade: 86.2%
- Second grade: 80.4%
- Third grade: 90.6%
- Fourth grade: 85.0%
- Fifth grade: 94.7%
- Total: 89.4%

School Goals and Data

In addition to the academic goals, Excell Academy defined a number of Other Student/School Goals in 2009-10. Each of these goals is addressed below:

- *Complete Phase II of Building Expansion Project* – Excell Academy's Building Expansion project includes increasing square footage at the current main location, with the long-term goal of becoming the sole occupant at a single, expanded site. During the current phase of the building expansion effort, we plan to renovate the 2 remaining suites to provide for classrooms, offices, and restrooms. Square footage is being increased by leasing the two additional suites adjacent to the school's existing space at 6510 Zane Avenue North, Brooklyn Park. Negotiations for the additional space began in 2008-09 and continued through 2009-10, though the project is still in process. At this point (late summer 2010), construction on the two additional suites is to begin January 2011 and be completed by the end of the school year, so that Excell can occupy the expanded space by summer 2011. Phase III of the project is to create an addition on the north end of the building at a later date.

- *Enrollment growth to 550 students* – This goal was not attained during 2009-10, largely due to lack of space to accommodate more students. The current Excell Academy facility was full during the 2009-10 school year. Enrollment did increase compared to the previous year; there were 474 students enrolled at Excell Academy as of October 1, 2009, an increase of 60 from the previous October.

The 2009-10 school year was Excell Academy's first year serving 8th grade, and the first year with a second site for middle school. This was done to allow the school to continue expanding enrollment though additional space was not available at the main site. The middle school served approximately 86 students in grades 6-8. There were four classrooms: two for 6th grade and one each for 7th and 8th. The site was staffed by four teachers including a lead teacher, all subject specialists. In addition there was a full time special education teacher, a full time behavior interventionist and a part time ELL teacher. The principal and executive director split their time between the main site and the middle school.

- *Incorporate more technology / Advance technology by grade levels* – The 2009-10 school year saw a significant growth in the technology Excell Academy implements to support student learning. There were numerous purchases of computer products, including desktop computers, laptop computers, computer projectors, etc. Significant resources are also put into the purchase of software products. Leading products are anti-virus/anti-spyware software which is much needed in the internet/cyber computing environment today. Other products include operating system upgrades for the school's computers.

The emphasis on computer and technology learning for students was greatly enhanced during 2009-10. A few new online training/learning products were introduced:

- Excell Academy was selected to pilot an online reading product called Lexia Reading. This product is offered to students from K-8. Students are taken to the computer by their teachers in terms during the week to complete their lessons.
 - Our school was offered membership to a satellite learning tool by Twin Cities Schools Telecommunication Group (TCSTG). Learning materials are transmitted via satellite and received at the school to be recorded to DVD and distributed to teachers. This technology needs reinforcement in the next school year.
 - Continued regular computer lab classes were provided for grades 2-5 at the main campus, and 6-8 at the middle school. Lessons include Typing Tutor, and functions of the computer.
 - Online learning tools were presented by teachers from various online learning websites.
- *Develop and Implement gifted program* – This goal was not accomplished during 2009-10, due to budget constraints. However, Excell Academy did hire a master teacher in gifted education to do a workshop with classroom teachers, that focused on differentiating instruction for gifted students. Through the workshop, teachers learned about identifying gifted students and addressing their needs in the classroom, academically and socially. Excell Academy plans to continue this approach to meeting the needs of gifted students during 2010-11. Continuing to challenge our gifted students remains an important goal and we hope to start a gifted program in 2011-12.

- *Hire Business Manager* – Excell Academy hired a fulltime Finance Manager during the summer of 2010. The goal behind establishing this position was to free the executive director of some of her finance-related responsibilities in order to allow more time for ensuring implementation of the Excell Academy mission and vision, and developing relationships with the community.

- *Improve classroom management and School Climate* – The Executive Director reported that effective classroom management was lacking in a few classrooms during 2009-10. Review of statistics regarding students being sent to the school’s Quiet Room due to disciplinary violations showed a slight drop in the proportion of students referred three or more times: during 2008-09, 29 of 312 students or 9% had three or more referrals; during 2009-10, 31 of 387 students or 8% had three or more referrals. To help address classroom management, lead teachers worked with the teachers who were struggling in this area, coaching them on effective strategies. In addition to the coaching, other strategies to address behavior management include:
 - Continued implementation of Responsive Classroom (all Excell Academy teachers have received training in this approach to classroom management)
 - Implementing a schoolwide character education program (see next item)
 - Revision of the school code of conduct and behavior management procedures; the Quiet Rooms have been redefined as in-school suspension rooms
 - Staff have been hired to staff in-school suspension rooms at both the main site and middle school; a behavior intervention specialist works with these staff and with the teachers of students placed on in-school suspension. Excell Academy’s aim in utilizing the in-school suspension rooms is to keep students in school as much as possible, and prevent students who are sent there from missing out academically.

- *Implement Character Ed. Program* – For the 2009-10 school year, Excell Academy implemented Character Counts, a character education program that focuses on specific character traits. These traits, or pillars of character, teach our students about the importance of a safe, healthy, and responsible school community. Students were exposed to daily character education lessons in the classroom. In addition, monthly school-wide assemblies were held to showcase students who displayed an excellent example of leadership. Common language and positive role models were themes throughout the year. Staff report that Excell Academy’s students benefited from this positive school-wide culture. Character Counts will continue, in all grades K-8, in 2010-11. There will be a character trait of the month, and every teacher will be expected to address the character trait daily, in some form.

- *Build capacity within the transportation department* – This was accomplished through the purchase of two buses during 2009-10 that Excell Academy plans to use beginning with the new school year. The new buses were not used during 2009-10 as Excell did not have licensed bus drivers. Funding for drivers is in place for 2010-11 however, and the school-owned buses are to be used to transport some of the students who live furthest from the school (a school-owned bus is to replace one of Excell Academy’s twelve regular routes), between the middle school and main building for specials, for field trips, and potentially to do our own busing of special education students (the smaller of the two buses will be available for this purpose if needed).

- *Implement Professional Development Plan / Goals for all staff* – Professional Development plans were created for the Executive Leadership Team, and plans put in place for teachers to create PD goals through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) beginning in the fall of 2010. Teachers will be divided into six PLCs based on grade levels. Each PLC will be facilitated by one Lead Teacher and have one to two Mentor Teachers and two to four teachers for a total PLC membership of four to seven licensed staff members. Each PLC will meet weekly for 60 minutes to focus on one reading strategy each month. Under the tutelage and direction of the Lead Teacher, the strategy will be introduced during the first meeting of the month. It will be modeled and discussed among the PLC members to be implemented during the following weeks. The team will spend the next two or three weeks working on improving how the individual team members teach the strategy. Team members will review student work, conduct lesson studies, demonstrate the particular teaching strategy and perform other activities that will help in the development of teaching a particular strategy. Schoolwide goals for professional development, to be implemented during 2010-11, are as follows:
 - Excell Academy for Higher Learning meets AYP in all areas required by MDE
 - Principal/Lead/Mentor (PLM) gives proper sufficient, effective support with classroom/student behavioral issues

- *Build teacher mentorship / educational leadership within grade levels* – plans were put in place to build teacher mentorship and educational leadership beginning in 2010-11. The Lead Teachers have the following responsibilities:
 - Observe teachers in the professional learning community (PLC) a minimum of one time per quarter for a yearly minimum of four observations.
 - Conduct pre and post observation conferences with each observed teacher.
 - Conduct quarterly observations of another Lead Teacher including the corresponding and pre and post observation conferences.
 - Facilitate weekly PLC meetings
 - Attend one training per year on working with adults.
 - Oversee field-testing of best practices and research of instructional strategies.
 - Provide professional development and educational research to peers.
 - Maintain a primary role in student instruction.
 - Provide peer coaching and mentoring to teachers.
 - Incorporate student data into decision-making processes.
 - Participate in the Leadership Evaluation Team.
 - Facilitate one early release professional development day.

The Mentor Teachers have the following responsibilities:

- Train and mentor probationary teachers.
- Focus on the goals and professional development of the assigned probationary teacher.
- Conduct two quarterly observations of the assigned probationary teacher using the informal classroom observation checklist.
- Field test best practices and research instructional strategies.
- Provide professional development and educational research to the assigned probationary teacher.
- Maintain a primary role in student instruction.
- Provide peer coaching and mentoring to the assigned probationary teacher.
- Incorporate student data into the decision making process.

The Principal/Lead Mentor will provide tangible data that clearly shows that 100% of the Teacher professional development and evaluation responsibilities (job descriptions) are fulfilled consistently quarterly throughout the school year. Lead teacher meetings with the Principal/Lead Mentor (every Thursday for the first two months of the school year) use proper, professional, wise judgment in communicating with all staff students and parents (families).

Community Interaction and Cultural Diversity

Community interaction continued as an important practice in 2009-10; Excell Academy's goal in this area is that *All students will have an opportunity to benefit from community partnerships and/or other types of community involvement annually*. A record of community-involvement events during 2009-10 included:

- Charter School Athletics League
- Local Library
- Book Fair
- Read to Succeed Night
- Toys for Tots for the needy
- Insight Newspaper featured Executive Director of Excell
- 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 Feed the Community Food Program
- Junior Achievement
- Box Tops/Milktops/Soup Labels
- Jump Rope for Heart
- Recycling Trash Clean Up
- Walk for Education

Cultural Diversity also remains an important aspect of the Excell Academy program. Excell Academy has two goals for fostering cultural diversity:

- *Create a culturally sensitive and comfortable learning environment in which students are free to express themselves intellectually, creatively, and affectively*
- *Create a culturally diverse curriculum that reflects the culture of racial and economic diversity of the global community, measured by example of curriculum*

Efficacy of efforts to achieve the cultural diversity goals was to be measured by a student survey, which was not completed during 2009-10. However, we note that the Core Knowledge curriculum which is in use at Excell Academy, is a curriculum that reflects the diversity of the global community. The Core Knowledge Sequence units promote cultural literacy and racial and economic diversity. Some examples include:

- Study of Africa and students' ancestry
- Festival of Nations
- Winter Musical (multicultural songs)
- Spring Musical

- Core Knowledge Night
- Core Knowledge Global Studies Units
- Civil Rights leaders

In addition, the entire staff of Excell Academy participated in a two-day retreat on Cultural Sensitivity. This 2-day retreat trained staff on how to relate to and/or how to be more sensitive to the variety of cultural differences among students and their families. The retreat also included training on how to communicate with and build relationships with students and their parents / families.

Innovative Practices

Some innovative strategies implemented for the 2009-2010 school year included the following:

- CEO Open Door – This practice was put in place by the CEO in order to allow for parents / families to have more communication with and access to the Chief Executive Officer throughout the school year. The CEO Open Door days were scheduled on the last Wednesday of each month from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.
- Early Release Days – This practice was implemented in order to give teachers common planning time and to participate in professional learning communities (PLC's). One day per month, (for eight months), the students were released at 1:00 pm. During the remainder of the day teachers participated in various scheduled staff development trainings, activities, workshops, PLC's, etc., in order to develop themselves to become more effective teachers, thereby increasing student achievement. In a teacher focus group conducted at the end of the school year, 100% of teachers found the Early Release Wednesdays to be an effective strategy to develop their teaching and instructional skills. Parents were also very supportive of Early Release Wednesdays by showing their support to the school board's decision to increase the school day by 10 minutes. In order to ensure that the students learning time would not decrease (due to being released early one day per month) the board added an additional 10 minutes per day to each school day for students.
- Sunshine Reading – Includes teachers, principal, CEO, parents, students, other volunteers, read to a group of students for 15-20 minutes during and after breakfast time. This practice took place every morning for all students in grades K-5. Teachers began implementing this practice in order to increase student achievement in reading.

Program Challenges

Two significant challenges faced by Excell Academy during the 2009-2010 school year were adequately staffing the middle school, and making Adequate Yearly Progress:

- Second Site Staffing – Well into the year, the administration realized that the second site (Middle School) was not sufficiently staffed to address the plethora of issues that developed over the year. For the 2010-2011 school year, administration has allocated sufficient funding in the budget to add the needed additional staffing. These additional staff include an In School Suspension Staff whose main function is to support the

Behavior Intervention Specialist and students in need of proper support when they need time out of the classroom; a Receptionist/Office Manager whose main function is to act as a communication agent within the site and between the two sites; and an English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher whose main function is to address the unique needs of Excell's growing population of English Language Learners and students new to the United States. The CEO and K-8 Principal have reorganized staffing responsibilities and are developing Lead and Mentor teachers within the site, as well as allocating time in their schedules to provide sufficient leadership and oversight at the second site.

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – Excell Academy did not make AYP in reading and math Proficiency in 2009 or 2010. The four years prior, Excell Academy made AYP three of those years. In 2009, Excell Academy made AYP schoolwide and in all subgroups except for Special Education. We missed making AYP by 1.5 index points in math and 1 index point in reading that year. During the 2010 school year, Excell Academy increased the percentage of students who scored proficient in reading by 4.7%. Even with this growth, we missed making AYP in reading by between .5 and 3.5 index points in the various subgroups and schoolwide. Excell Academy made a concerted effort to support classroom teachers by pushing in support staff during the morning reading blocks so that students could get instruction in groups of three to seven students. We feel that this new approach will begin to show dividends this school year on our state assessments. The percentage of our students who scored proficient on the math portion of the state assessment went down by 2.8%.

We have a very mobile student population and we get many new students each year. Because of the mobility of our students, the majority of our students have been in attendance three years or less. What we have found over the last two years is that students who have been in attendance at our school for more than three years tend to perform higher on the math and reading tests than do students who have attended our school for three years or less. Another factor to consider is that in math, the newer students over the last two years have not met the standards at a higher rate than those students who have been in our school for more than three years. In looking at the 2008 school year – the last year we made AYP in all categories – our newer students were performing as well as our students who had more years of attendance. Excell's school leadership is in the processes of submitting a school wide accountability plan to Excell's board to address strategic actions that will take place in order to meet AYP targets for 2010-2011.

Finances

Excell Academy outperformed the budget for fiscal year 2010. The school added an estimated \$186,000 to the fund balance of the general fund and it is projected to be \$804,000 or 17.3% of FY10 expenditures. The food service fund added a small amount to its fund balance, estimated to be \$1,260 while the community education fund struggled with enrollment for the year and reduced its fund balance an estimated \$63,000 down to \$32,000. Excell Academy is financially stable and anticipates increasing the fund balance in all funds in the future. The FY10 audit report is not yet available, but the school received an unqualified opinion in its FY09 audit report. One deficiency related to the internal controls of the payroll process was noted, but it

was not considered a material weakness and the school has improved the controls in FY10. In addition, the audit found neither material weaknesses nor noncompliance issues and Excell Academy was awarded the Finance Award from the State of Minnesota.

The table below shows Excell Academy's originally adopted budget (the Projection) and the Final Revised budget for 2009-10.

**Excell Academy for Higher Learning
Summary Income Statement
2009-10**

	FY10 Projection	FY10 Final Revised Budget
Fund 01 - General Fund		
Revenues		
State Revenue		
General Education Aid	3,129,570	3,237,950
Charter School Lease Aid	761,100	719,685
Special Education Aid - State	211,716	277,380
Total State Revenue	4,102,386	4,235,016
Federal Revenue		
Title I, Part A 1	136,974	136,982
Title I – ARRA	85,958	86,947
Title II, Part A	13,947	14,132
Title VIII - Stabilization Funds	209,784	209,784
Special Education Aid - Federal	64,734	141,547
Early Intervention - Regular Funds	0	6,842
Early Intervention - ARRA Funds	0	10,026
Preschool Incentive	660	4,221
SpEd Discretionary Program & Grants	2,372	0
Total Federal Revenue	514,429	610,480
Other Local Revenue Sources		
Admissions/Student Activity	2,000	2,000
Interest Revenue	5,000	1,000
Rent Income	7,800	7,800
Donations	111	5,000
Miscellaneous Local Revenue	0	1,000
Fundraising Revenue	8,000	5,000
Uniform Revenue	10,764	16,000
Microsoft Grant Revenue	0	6,000
Total Other Local Sources	33,585	43,800
Total Revenues	4,650,400	4,889,296
Expenses		
Administration		
Salaries	402,461	419,957
Benefits	112,887	128,284
Purchased Services	213,785	220,954
Supplies & Materials	26,221	25,721
Equipment & Furniture	4,120	4,120

**Excell Academy for Higher Learning
Summary Income Statement
2009-10**

	FY10 Projection	FY10 Final Revised Budget
Finance	1,906	15,000
Miscellaneous	57,681	58,760
Total Administration	819,059	872,795
General Education		
Salaries	880,990	809,084
Benefits	210,429	209,790
50% MOE Funds	16,034	0
Purchased Services	21,668	52,500
Supplies & Materials	103,549	116,575
Equipment & Furniture	15,938	20,000
Miscellaneous	4,308	4,308
Total General Education	1,252,915	1,212,256
Title Programs		
Title II, Part A - Teacher & Principal Training & Recruiting	13,947	14,132
Title I, Part A - Improving Education of the Disadvantaged	136,945	136,982
Title VIII - Stabilization Funds	210,765	210,770
Title I – ARRA	85,958	86,947
Total Title Programs	447,615	448,831
State Special Education		
Salaries	157,390	179,571
Benefits	41,930	52,879
Purchased Services	6,467	20,000
Supplies & Materials	5,930	5,930
Total State Special Education	211,716	258,380
Federal Special Education		
Salaries	11,449	29,202
Benefits	1,506	112,345
CEIS Regular Funds	0	6,842
CEIS ARRA Funds	0	10,026
Preschool ARRA Funds	0	4,221
Purchased Services	41,698	0
Supplies & Materials	7,183	0
Equipment	5,930	0
Total Federal Special Education	67,766	162,636
Instructional Support Services		
Salaries	8,088	5,500
Benefits	1,524	799
Purchased Services	10,000	20,000
Supplies and Materials	7,363	7,363
Equipment	6,000	0
Total Instructional Support	32,975	33,662

**Excell Academy for Higher Learning
Summary Income Statement
2009-10**

	FY10 Projection	FY10 Final Revised Budget
Services		
Student Support Services		
Salaries	71,149	70,755
Benefits	24,428	20,790
Purchased Services	342,828	376,654
Supplies and Materials	5,693	26,542
Capital Expenditures	0	6,000
Total Student Support Services	444,097	500,740
Facilities		
Salaries	73,552	36,755
Benefits	15,664	10,066
Purchased Services	297,195	362,835
Building Lease Expense	868,421	858,886
Supplies & Materials	25,353	25,353
Equipment/Furniture	5,000	18,432
Total Facilities	1,285,184	1,312,327
Total Expenses	4,561,328	4,801,627
General Fund Net Income	89,072	87,669
Fund 02 - Food Service Fund		
Revenues		
Total State Revenue	12,261	10,000
Total Federal Revenue	245,768	271,981
Total Other Local Sources	52,856	32,359
Total Revenues	310,886	314,340
Expenses		
Salaries	18,270	13,650
Benefits	6,278	5,606
Purchased Services	1,186	1,186
Supplies and Materials	284,559	294,305
Miscellaneous	593	593
Total Expenses	310,886	314,340
Food Service Fund Net Income	0	0
Fund 04 - Community Ed.		
Revenues		
Total General Program Revenue	15,759	5,869
Total Full Day Kindergarten	85,050	70,000
Total Before & After School	32,580	25,000

**Excell Academy for Higher Learning
Summary Income Statement
2009-10**

	FY10 Projection	FY10 Final Revised Budget
Total Kindergarten Readiness	125,676	110,000
Total Summer Smart	19,308	25,000
Total Revenues	278,373	235,869
Expenses		
Total General Community Ed.	116,212	103,128
Total Full Day Kindergarten	35,270	20,436
Total Before & After School	15,386	12,917
Total Kindergarten Readiness	92,824	114,214
Total Summer Smart	14,886	17,993
Total Expenses	274,577	268,687
Community Ed. Net Income	3,796	-32,818
Net Income - All Funds	92,868	54,851

Authorizer

Excell Academy for Higher Learning Charter School No. 4068 is authorized 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. A new charter was signed in 2008 for another three year period.

Whenever possible, the authorizer liaison has attended Excell Academy's board meeting. Additionally, the meeting minutes are sent to the authorizer liaison. Any questions that arise from the authorizer liaison are then addressed to the appropriate parties – usually either the board chair or the school director. The North Central Authorizer Liaison also meets with the Director of Excell Academy several times a year. This past year, formal meetings were scheduled in the fall to review the annual report and address issues that arose from that report. In the spring, two additional meetings took place regarding the progress of Excell in achieving its goals and concerning the on-going relationship between North Central University and Excell Academy for Higher Learning.

North Central University has been supportive in giving advice and assistance in Excell's educational program as well as school organization operations. In addition, North Central has sent student teachers to Excell in past years, and plans to do so again. Excell Academy's sponsor liaison is Professor Sharon Connor. Sharon can be contacted at North Central's Department of Education 612-343- 4738 or by email Sharon.connor@northcentral.edu.

School's State Report Card

Excell Academy's State Report Card is available online at http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/schoolDistrictInfo.do?SCHOOL_NUM=000&DISTRICT_NUM=4068&DISTRICT_TYPE=07.

Non-Profit Status

Excell Academy for Higher Learning is a nonprofit corporation registered as a Charity with the Minnesota Attorney General's office. Its current status is active; see <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Charities/CharitySearch.asp>.