

Best Academy among best in nation

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Best Academy, the Minneapolis charter school serving African American boys in grades K-8, celebrated a recent national award for its efforts to close the academic achievement gap with a community event to salute its students and the village that support them, last week.

"We understand that it takes a village to raise a child and we want to recognize everyone in our community who has supported our efforts to help these young men develop academically, socially and morally," said Eric Mahmoud, executive director of Best Academy.

"It is an honor to be one of five schools chosen nationally and we want to celebrate the recognition while also acknowledging that we need to continue our work to ensure these boys can beat the odds now and into the future," Mahmoud said.

The event included performances by Best Academy students, a formal awards presentation, and remarks from Mahmoud and Minneapolis Public School Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson.

Harvest Preparatory School (Harvest Prep), Best Academy, and the new Mastery School in April reported that 2012 has been the very best year in the history of the State's premiere education resource for Black children. Harvest Prep president Eric Mahmoud reported that independent accountability and governing agencies have confirmed stellar successes in the area of academic achievement and sound financial management.

Mahmoud said Harvest Prep, Best Academy, and Mastery School were recently notified that all three schools have received the Minnesota School Finance Award for 2013. These awards are granted to schools for meeting all statutory requirements for submitting all audited financial data and reporting criterion.

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For fiscal year 2012, Harvest Prep and Best Academy received clean audits. The audits were so clean for 2012 that this was the first year in the history of the two schools that the auditors had no issues to put in a management letter to the respective school boards, Mahmoud said.

Both Harvest Prep and Best Academy developed the healthiest fund balances ever in the history of the schools, he said.

For the past two years, Harvest Prep has been the number one "Beating the Odds" school in the state of Minnesota in math.

In 2012, Harvest Prep was the number one "Beating the Odds" school in the state in both reading and math.

Best Academy was the number one high-poverty school (over 76% Free or Reduced Lunch) in the state of Minnesota as measured by the state's new Multiple Measurement Rating (MMR).

In 2012, Harvest Preparatory School and Best Academy had the best performance ever in science. Harvest performance on the science MCA increased by 30 percentile points over the previous school year. Best Academy's performance also increased by over 30 percentile points from the previous school year. Both Harvest and Best Academy exceeded the Minneapolis School district average in science in 2012, he said.

Fifth grade students in Best Academy (BA) significantly outperformed Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) (BA 56% versus MPS 33%) in science in 2012. BA students' performance was comparable to the state average for 5th grade science that same year (BA 56% versus state average 57%).

For the past two years Best Academy was recognized as a Reward School for its academic achievement for 2011 and 2012. This award is given to the schools that are in the top 10% of schools in the state of Minnesota.

For the past two years Harvest Prep has been recognized as a Reward School and Celebration School. Harvest Prep's authorizer (Audubon Center of the North Woods) has just issued a stellar Academic Performance Evaluation where in every category, from proficiency to academic growth, Audubon ranked Harvest Prep as Exemplary.

Mahmoud said, "To date, there has not been an educational system in Minnesota that has achieved the success that Harvest Prep and Best Academy have achieved for low-income and socially disadvantaged children who are at the greatest risk of academic failure."

MINNCANN confirmed this bold assessment, ranking Best Academy the number one middle school in the state of Minnesota in educating Black middle school students and number two in the state in the education of Black elementary students (see link below).

"We want to thank the students, parents, educators, board members, and supporters of Harvest Prep, Best Academy, and now the new Mastery School for consistently demonstrating that with hard work, commitment, skill, and most importantly, belief in our children, we can eliminate the

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achievement gap and ensure that there is equity in opportunity for all children in Minnesota," Mahmoud said.

The Top 10 School lists showcase the schools that are making the biggest learning gains and that are best serving traditionally underrepresented student group.

For additional details about the School Finance Award and other supportive materials: visit the Harvest Prep website at www.seed-harvest.org and click Reports, then Successes.