



PRINT

# Groundbreaking Charter Schools

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*Get to know the schools that received \$1 million each from Oprah's Angel Network!*  
**Aspire Public Schools**

**About the School:**

Aspire Public Schools is a nonprofit organization that is also one of the highest-performing public school systems in California. The 30 (and growing) open-enrollment, public charter schools are located across the state of California and focus on one goal: preparing urban students for college.

**The Mission:**

"College for certain."

**Academic Results:**

Aspire's first three graduating classes achieved a 100 percent acceptance rate to four-year colleges or universities. Many of these graduates will be the first in their families to pursue an undergraduate degree.

According to 2009–2010 Academic Performance Index (API) scores, Aspire Public Schools ranks first among districts serving low-income communities for the second year in a row.

**The Future:**

Aspire plans to open three to four new schools each year to provide quality educational opportunities for even more California children.

For more information, visit [AspirePublicSchools.org](http://AspirePublicSchools.org)



**Denver School of Science and Technology**

**About the School:**

The Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) is a free, open-enrollment public school serving middle and high school students. Founded in 2004, DSST is a college preparatory liberal arts school with a science and technology focus. All students are required to complete a rigorous curriculum—which includes pre-calculus, five years of high school science, an internship and a senior

project—to graduate.

### **The Students:**

DSST reflects the racial and economic diversity of Denver. Students attending DSST are from all neighborhoods across the Denver-metro area and are selected through a random lottery. There are no admissions criteria for students, nor is there tuition.

- 45 percent of DSST students are economically disadvantaged
- 60 percent are Hispanic or African-American
- 50 percent are first-generation college bound
- Most students enter DSST at least one grade level behind in math and English

### **Academic Results:**

One hundred percent of DSST's first graduating class was accepted into four-year colleges, including Stanford, MIT, Pomona, Cal-Tech and Wesleyan.

In 2007 and 2008, DSST outperformed every other high school in Denver in both student learning growth and absolute student performance.

For more information, visit [ScienceandTech.org](http://ScienceandTech.org).



### **LEARN Charter School Network**

#### **About the School:**

The LEARN Charter School Network operates four high-performing elementary schools in Chicago. LEARN and its predecessor, Lawndale Community School, have provided a high-quality education to children living in low-income communities for more than 30 years. Lawndale Community School began with 11 students in a small apartment in the North Lawndale community on Chicago's west side.

### **Core Values:**

1. Culture of respect
2. High expectations
3. Safe and nurturing environment
4. Focus on the whole child
5. Family involvement

### **Academic Results:**

In 2010, 100 percent of LEARN eighth-graders were accepted into college preparatory high schools in Chicago.

Ninety-nine percent of LEARN's alumni have graduated from high school, and 83 percent matriculated to a four-year college or university.

### **The Future:**

By 2019, LEARN hopes to operate 16 high-performing elementary schools with an enrollment capacity of 8,000 students. Six hundred students will graduate from the LEARN network annually, going on to matriculate to Chicago's most selective college preparatory high schools and, eventually, college.

For more information, visit [LEARNCharter.org](http://LEARNCharter.org).



## **Mastery Charter Schools**

### **About the School:**

Mastery Charter Schools operates four schools in Philadelphia, serving 2,100 students in grades 7 through 12. Mastery believes that educational inequity is the most pressing social problem facing our country—the civil rights issue of our day. Mastery insists on high expectations and support from relentless teachers so all students can achieve success.

### **School Motto:**

"Excellence. No excuses."

### **The Students:**

Students are not screened on the basis of academic ability. Prospective students are recruited through community outreach and are selected by lottery.

### **Academic Results:**

Through a unique partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, three of the four Mastery schools were originally low-performing district schools that turned around after Mastery came in. After Mastery assumed management of these schools, test scores increased an average of 52 percentage points per subject in every grade, while violence dropped 80 percent and student retention increased dramatically.

One hundred percent of Mastery's 2009 graduating class was accepted into a college or university. More than 93 percent of Mastery's first three graduating classes enrolled in higher education—67 percent in a four-year college. The class of 2008 received \$2 million in scholarships, and the college dropout rate for Mastery alumni is less than 20 percent.

### **The Future:**

In fall 2010, Mastery will open three new elementary schools. All three will be turnarounds of low-performing district schools.

For more information, visit [MasterCharter.org](http://MasterCharter.org).



## **New Orleans Charter Science and Math Academy —Sci Academy**

### **About the School:**

Sci Academy opened in 2008 with 90 ninth-graders entering a rigorous and inspiring environment focused on preparing them for promising futures and professional careers.

### **The Mission:**

Sci Academy strives to prepare all interested students for college success and equip them with the passion

and skills to begin innovative and world-changing pursuits.

### **Academic Results:**

More than half of the ninth-graders who entered Sci Academy's inaugural class had failed state promotional

tests, and more than 70 percent read well below the ninth-grade level. The school's principal, Ben Marcovitz, says many of these students had missed a full year of schooling because of Hurricane Katrina and were many grades behind.

By designing a program that both addresses their deficits and accelerates them beyond the average, the freshman class later scored a 76 percent on the state test, making it the third most successful high school in New Orleans.

"It is possible to take a kid coming out of eighth grade who is four or five years behind grade level and get them ready for college in their ninth through 12th years, and that's what we're doing here," Ben says.

For more information, visit [SciAcademy.org](http://SciAcademy.org).



## **YES Prep Public Schools**

### **About the School:**

YES Prep Public Schools is a free, open-enrollment public school system that serves 4,200 students in the sixth through 12th grades across eight schools in the Houston, Texas, area. For more than a decade, the school has been proving that all students can succeed.

- "YES" stands for Youth Engaged in Service, and students dedicate one Saturday each month to community service projects.

- Teachers have school-sponsored cell phones so students can contact them in the evenings and on weekends.
- YES Prep requires its students to participate in longer school days, a longer school year, college research trips, summer school and summer opportunities.

### **The Students:**

- 90 percent of YES Prep students are first-generation college bound
- 80 percent of YES Prep students are economically disadvantaged
- 95 percent of YES Prep students are Hispanic or African-American
- Most students enter YES Prep at least one grade level behind in math and English

### **Academic Results:**

For the 10th consecutive year, 100 percent of YES Prep's graduating seniors have been accepted into four-year colleges, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Rice, Stanford, Texas A&M and the University of Texas-Austin.

YES Prep has been consistently ranked as one of Houston's best public high schools by the *Houston Chronicle* and as one of the top 100 public high schools in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*.

For more information, visit [YESPrep.org](http://YESPrep.org).

