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A Texas Public Charter School

PRESS RELEASE

An Exemplary Three-peat!!

RISE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL TURNS IN ANOTHER “EXEMPLARY” TAKS PERFORMANCE

FOR RELEASE: Friday, August 1, 2008
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Public school accountability data just released from the Texas Education Agency confirms what Rise Academy teachers, parents, and students have known since last May: Rise Academy is an “exemplary” charter school for the third year in a row.

“We knew it was going to be very, very close,” explained Rise Founder and Director Richard Baumgartner. “I believe we made the exemplary mark by one 8th grade social studies test. Had that struggling student not passed, we would have fallen to the next ratings level,” he said.

Rise pass rates for the other TAKS subject areas, reading, writing, and science, were all in the 90 percent or higher range, with several subjects at the 100 percent rate. Texas schools must have a 90 percent or above pass rate in every subject summed across the grade levels to earn the prestigious “exemplary” rating.

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A high percentage of Rise students also achieved “commended” scores (usually 92 percent correct or above) on one or more of their tests. For example, 100 percent of Rise 6th graders (a total of six students) scored at this elite “commended” level in reading, while 73 percent of 5th graders (11 total students) did so in reading also, and 67 percent of 8th graders (a total of nine students) achieved a commended in science.

The exemplary rating concluded a highly successful year for Rise Academy in 2007/08. Last September, Rise was chosen as a state finalist for the National Title I Distinguished School award, and was the only Texas charter school nominated in 2007. Rise also graduated its first eighth grade class of nine students, four of whom are enrolled this fall in Lubbock High’s rigorous LEAP magnet program. In January 2008, Rise students won trophies in five of nine grade categories in which they competed in a city-wide poetry contest.

Rise’s high TAKS performances have not been without controversy. “I suppose we’ll receive yet another round of negative e-mails from anonymous nay-sayers, calling our kids ‘test idiots’ and claiming that they know nothing beyond the narrow range of the TAKS tests,” said Baumgartner. “That’s so bogus. Every school focuses on TAKS, but we also go beyond. We’ve read Shakespeare’s ‘Julius Caesar,’ written decisions on Constitutional cases, and analyzed the very troubling story of the Jena Six case.”

Rise students in grades 3rd through 8th took the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests in 2008. The Lubbock charter school enrolled students in grades pre-k through 8th in 2007/08. Rise Academy began operations in 1999 with 29 kindergarten students housed in one modular classroom building.

Rise Academy is an independent, public charter school. The school has open enrollment, and is unable to selectively “cherry-pick” students. About ninety-five percent of Rise students are low-income minority children residing mostly in east and northeast Lubbock neighborhoods, the lowest socioeconomic sections of the west Texas city of 202,000 residents.

As a charter school, Rise Academy must conform to all Texas Education Agency rules, with exceptions for teacher certification requirements and pay-scale. The academy expects to serve about 200 students in grades pre-k thru 8th in 2008/09.

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