Elev8 Chicago Wins Department of Education Award

Elev8 Picked as a Model School-Community Partnership
As Part of Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Program

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) recognized Elev8 Chicago, along with Elev8 Baltimore, as Together for Tomorrow (TFT) School Improvement Champions on Monday, October 15, in an event held at the Department.

Elev8 was one of 24 initiatives named as Together for Tomorrow Challenge Champions. This first-time award was given to schools, educational programs and organizations that met Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Challenge’s criteria for community school models that propel improvement in low-performing schools. An additional seven demonstration sites operating as part of the AmeriCorps VISTA program through CNCS were recognized.

"When it comes to turning around low-performing schools, the Department's investments and the work of schools and districts are only part of the solution," said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who presented the awards. "Our schools need community engagement to support and sustain school improvement. The Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Champions we recognize today have made model commitments to help foster partnerships, propel school improvement, and produce better outcomes for students. To sustain change over the long haul, nothing is more important."

Elev8 was represented by Nicole A. Johnson, Senior Director, Elev8 Baltimore; Syda Segovia Taylor, Director, Elev8 Chicago; Mark Carter, Program Director,
Elev8 Baltimore; and Carlos Nelson, Executive Director of Chicago's Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp.

The two sites with Elev8 schools won in the Showcase category for existing initiatives. The award recognized Elev8 as one of America's best existing and emerging school-community partnerships working to raise student achievement in our lowest-performing schools. A panel of staff at the Department of Education, the White House and CNCS judged the winners of the challenge.

"I want to commend Elev8 for its commitment to supporting Chicago’s students, both inside and outside the classroom," said Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "My 2013 budget proposal is focused on supporting children and families, with a significant investment in after-school, early-education and summer programs across the city, but we know we cannot do this alone, and it's the efforts of Chicago-based organizations like Elev8, community members and leaders across the city that bring us closer to helping every child get on a path to success."

Elev8 is a full-service community school model that unites schools, families and other community partners to provide an array of services to help students succeed. The initiative focuses on four elements linked to achievement and success: extended-day learning, family and community support services, school-based health care, and family and community engagement. Elev8 was launched in 2007 as a full-service community school model with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies. There are Elev8 schools in Baltimore, Chicago, New Mexico and Oakland.

"Elev8 is a model for what can be achieved when communities come together to improve the outcomes for students and families," said Stephen McConnell, Country Director for U.S. Programmes at The Atlantic Philanthropies. "We congratulate the Baltimore and Chicago Elev8 schools for this significant recognition of the positive impact they have had in their communities."

The Chicago Elev8 schools were recognized as TFT Champions for the 2012-13 school year in part for the following work:

- Elev8 Chicago is an after-school, health and family-support initiative in five middle grade schools in underserved areas of Chicago. Elev8 Chicago offers learning opportunities outside school hours, school-based health and family support initiatives, mentoring and leadership programs, and capacity-building for students, parents and community members. Part of the TFT Challenge called for building capacity to work together to strengthen partnerships. Elev8 Chicago did this by linking each of the five Chicago public middle schools in the program with a key community organization in each neighborhood. They in turn developed relationships...
with representatives from Chicago Public Schools, health and student services, and local youth development partners.

In addition to the receiving the award, TFT is committed to helping Elev8 Baltimore and Elev8 Chicago expand efforts to help turn around the lowest-performing schools through measureable student outcomes such as attendance, behavior, course performance and college access.

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**Elev8 Chicago** is led by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation’s Chicago office (LISC Chicago). Elev8 Chicago operates in five schools: Ames Middle School, Marquette Elementary School, Orozco Academy, Perspectives Middle Academy, and Reavis Elementary School.