

# Uncommon Schools

EXCELLENCE NORTH ★ STAR COLLEGIATE TRUE NORTH PREPARATORY

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **NORTH STAR ELEMENTARY TO WELCOME INAUGURAL CLASS School Joins Three North Star Academy Schools in Newark**

August 30, 2007. *Newark, New Jersey.* After 10 years of running one of the nation's highest performing urban charter schools for middle and high school students, North Star Academy is opening its first elementary school. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 75 Kindergarten students will arrive for their first day at North Star Academy Elementary Charter School. The City of Newark and Newark Public Schools have made space available for the school at 226 Dayton Street. North Star Elementary will grow to serve over 350 students in grades K through 4. The school's mission is to serve Newark children by building an uncommon school where students partake of a rigorous, 11-month, extended day, academic program that gives them the means to beat the odds in school and life.

With the goal of dramatically improving student achievement, North Star Elementary will offer an academic program that includes 200 minutes of daily literacy instruction, a longer school day, and an emphasis on discipline and character development. The school's academic program is based on practices and approaches that have proven effective in producing significant academic gains at the highest performing, urban public schools in the country. As Founding Principal Julie Jackson explains, "By starting with Kindergarten, we are able to provide our students with a very strong foundation in literacy and math. Our students will be well-prepared for advanced work when they reach 5<sup>th</sup> grade." Ms. Jackson, a Teach For America alumna with 14 years of teaching experience, has been with North Star for 10 years and previously led its High School. In 2002 she was the recipient of a Dodge Leadership Award for principals who have shown strong leadership and initiative. In preparation for her new role, Ms. Jackson developed expertise in elementary education by working with the elementary schools in the Uncommon Schools network, Excellence Charter School and Leadership Preparatory Charter School.

The first North Star Academy opened in the fall of 1997 to 72 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. North Star has grown to encompass two middle schools and a high school, serving nearly 500 students. North Star Academy has established itself as one of the highest-performing urban charter schools in the country:

- North Star Academy has the highest rate of four-year college acceptance and attendance of any school in the state of New Jersey.
- 100% of the members of the class of 2008 passed the 2007 New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment in English Language Arts, compared to 58% across the Newark District.
- 98% of North Star 7<sup>th</sup> graders scored advanced or proficient on the 2007 New Jersey Language Arts exam, compared to 54% across the Newark district. 96% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders scored advanced or proficient on the 2007 New Jersey Math exam, compared to 39% across the Newark district. Based on these results, North Star is the highest performing urban school in New Jersey.

North Star Elementary is a member of Uncommon Schools, a nonprofit charter management organization that starts and manages among the most outstanding urban college preparatory charter schools working to close the achievement gap in the Northeast. This work began with North Star Academy Charter School of Newark. Uncommon builds uncommonly great schools by developing and managing regional networks that are philosophically aligned and highly accountable. Based in New York City, the organization has created a home office from which it provides a full complement of management services that allow school leaders to focus on instructional leadership. As of August 2007, Uncommon manages nine schools in New York City, upstate New York, and Newark, New Jersey. The organization ultimately will encompass more than 30 schools, serving more than 10,000 K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

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If you would like additional information on this topic, or to schedule an interview with North Star Elementary's Founding Principal Julie Jackson or Uncommon Schools CEO Norman Atkins, please contact Megan C. Zug at 617-645-4063 or by email at [mzug@uncommonschoools.org](mailto:mzug@uncommonschoools.org).