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UC Berkeley's CAL Prep is closing the achievement gap
Learning accelerated for two-thirds of those with Below Basic skills in prior year

(BERKELEY, CA) August 31, 2007 - Students of California College Preparatory Academy (CAL Prep), an early college middle and high school that serves low-income urban youth, co-founded by UC Berkeley and Aspire Public Schools, showed impressive increases in the California Standards Tests during the last school year.

34.4 percent of CAL Prep students scored Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts (up from 23.7 in 2006), and math proficiency almost doubled to 44.5 percent (from 23.7 in 2006). Further, on these grade level tests, which cover mastery of each year's new curriculum, students in grade seven gave the strongest demonstration of the school's positive path with 43 percent Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts and 56 percent Proficient or Advanced in Math.

Although the percentage of English Language learners doubled in 2007 to a third of all CAL Prep students, 11 percent more students scored Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts than in 2006. Overall, CAL Prep accelerated the learning of at least two thirds of its students who scored Far Below Basic in either English Language Arts or Math the prior year.

Based on these results, CAL Prep's Academic Performance Index (API) score rose by 77 points, to 725.

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“We’re very proud that many of our students are doubling and almost tripling their mastery of the core curriculum. Our collaboration with UC Berkeley is helping us continue to increase the quality of our instructional program so that in the future all of our students can show this kind of success,” said Steve Liles, CAL Prep’s principal.

More than 60 percent of the CAL Prep student body is low income, and over 92 percent come from the African American and Latino communities. The rigorous curriculum, extra supports, and the addition of several college credit courses for CAL Prep’s 9th graders, is helping CAL Prep students close the achievement gap.

At a time when many urban schools are experiencing a dearth of qualified teachers to meet the needs of their students, CAL Prep experienced a 100 percent retention rate of teachers for the current school year.

“Dedicated, consistent teachers, Cal undergrads helping each week, and UC Berkeley faculty helping design the school are putting us on the right path” observed Graduate School of Education Dean David Pearson at UC Berkeley. “I was very impressed with the quality of new teachers hired as the school added the inaugural 9th grade, and proud that the connections to Cal motivated many of them to apply.”

Quick Facts: CAL Prep is an Aspire Public Schools charter secondary school currently serving grades 6 – 9 in North Oakland at the site of the former Golden Gate Elementary School. One grade will be added per year, reaching 420 students in grades 6 – 12 in 2010-11. Extended school year (Aug. 6, 2007 to June 21, 2008), a Parent-School Agreement and significant involvement with UC Berkeley are key elements of CAL Prep’s design. For more information about enrolling in CAL Prep please contact Principal Steve Liles at 510.658.2900 or steve.liles@aspirepublicschools.org.

For information about volunteering at or donating to CAL Prep please contact Marguerite Judson (Development Director of UCB Center for Educational Partnerships) at 510.642.9813 or mjudson@berkeley.edu.

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