

# THE Center for Education Reform



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## **CHALLENGE CHARTER SCHOOL NAMED A NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL OF THE YEAR**

**Washington, D.C., May 16, 2007** – The Center for Education Reform (CER), the nation’s premiere education reform group, recognized Challenge Charter School as a National Charter School of the Year, an honor given to 53 charter schools from across the U.S. at a special awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. earlier today.

After the ceremonies, education writers Jay Mathews of the *Washington Post* and Greg Toppo of *USA Today* spoke to representatives from the schools at a Press Club luncheon. The representatives later had a chance to hear from Education Secretary Margaret Spellings and speak with members of Congress at an event on Capitol Hill.

“We commend Challenge Charter School and the other honorees for their achievement,” said CER President Jeanne Allen. “They are among the vanguard of a school choice movement that provides more than one million children an educational opportunity that might otherwise be unavailable.”

Challenge Charter School has been a leader in Arizona for the last 11 years. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> Official Core Knowledge School in Arizona; has always passed AYP and has the highest AZ Learns academic achievement school profile of “Excelling”. Of the 107 Excelling Elementary schools in Maricopa County (out of over 1000 schools) only 7 had Free & Reduced populations in excess of 30%, and Challenge is one of those 7 schools.

All U.S. charter schools were eligible for the honor. The selection process began in the fall of 2006, with all schools asked to respond to CER's annual survey. A small percentage of survey respondents were invited to – and ultimately submitted – detailed information for consideration for this recognition.

Evaluation of the schools proceeded along four themes: achievement; planning and execution; satisfaction; and policies and programs. Each theme included additional criteria (12 in total), such as improvement over time; percentage of at-risk students served; meeting mission and goals; and parental involvement. CER identified 53 exceptional schools deserving recognition.

“Charter schools across the nation succeed despite limited resources and oftentimes hostile bureaucratic environments,” said Ms. Allen. “They are the heroes in a civil rights struggle for educational choice, particularly for children and parents of limited means. We’re delighted to recognize some truly shining examples.”

In the 2006-07 school year, there are more than 3,940 charter schools serving over 1.16 million students in 40 states and Washington, D.C.

Charter schools are innovative, public schools designed by educators, parents, or civic leaders that are open by choice, accountable for results, and free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools.

For a complete list of the 53 schools honored today, visit <http://www.edreform.com/csoy/>.

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*The Center for Education Reform (CER) creates opportunities for and challenges obstacles to better education for America's communities. Founded in 1993, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to foster positive and bold education reforms. For more information, visit [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com)*