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(CATALYST) HOWLAND CHARTER SCHOOL

A COLLEGE PREP SCHOOL STRIVES TO TURN STUDENTS INTO INTELLIGENT, RESPECTABLE INDIVIDUALS

Nicholas Short

Every school should be a college prep school according to Dr. Chaun Johnson. Schools like Howland Charter School, says Dr. Johnson—the school's principal—gives children discipline, support, and valuable skills that help them prepare for both college and life itself.

This is especially important for intercity school students, he adds. "Students in the intercity today are not really pushed forward to make it in college. My mind goes to the 50s and the 60s, where people have shed blood and died so we could go to college, and I think people today have taken all that for granted," he said. College prep schools are needed because "we have to prepare our people and train our people for college"—that is if they desire to go to college. In his first year at Howland Charter, Johnson is doing what he can to help his students.

Howland Charter, located on 1616 S. Spaulding, is one of the Catalyst Schools, which were created to provide K-8 grade students a challenging curriculum that nurtures academic, social and emotional growth. At Howland Charter, students receive helpful tools and methods, including more efficient ways to study and take notes, that prepare them for not only high school but also for higher education.

Sammy Davis, Jr.; Savion Glover; and Duke Ellington. Another mural provides peaceful surroundings, such as green trees standing on grass that lies next to a bed of water, to help establish a peaceful environment within the school.

Each class has students sitting in their seats, working hard at their assignments while their teachers—there is a teacher and the instructor's apprentice for every class—watch over them. Johnson experiences Howland Charter's sights and sounds every school day. One minute, he is giving a child a hug. The next minute, he is lecturing a student on the proper way to act while at the school.

"Every child in here is unique, every child is talented, every child has a gift, but every child does not realize that gift, so it's my job [to ensure] that they are disciplined to know that one day they are going to be great," he said. In fact, he adds, they're already great, so they must act like the phenomenal, intelligent human beings they are. To help the students realize their greatness, the school provides such structured, disciplinary actions as a morning ritual of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the African-American national anthem Lift Every Voice and Sing.

While traveling through the halls of the school, one can hear kids screaming with delight in one room and complete silence in the next. Students, with their clean uniforms, can be seen being escorted back to their classroom by their teachers after recess. As they walk up the stairs to their rooms, they walk pass colorful murals created by the students. One mural features famous legends of the arts, including

The school also collaborates with other organizations to establish resources and opportunities for its students. The 10th District Chicago Police Department, for instance, teams up with Catalyst to administer GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) and DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). The Lawndale Christian Development Corp provides Catalyst students with a range of opportunities to get involved

in community projects. Several major colleges, including DePaul University and Columbia College, also work with the schools to establish activities that are designed to enlightening its children.

Howland Charter's methods seem to be working: According to the Catalyst Schools website, there has

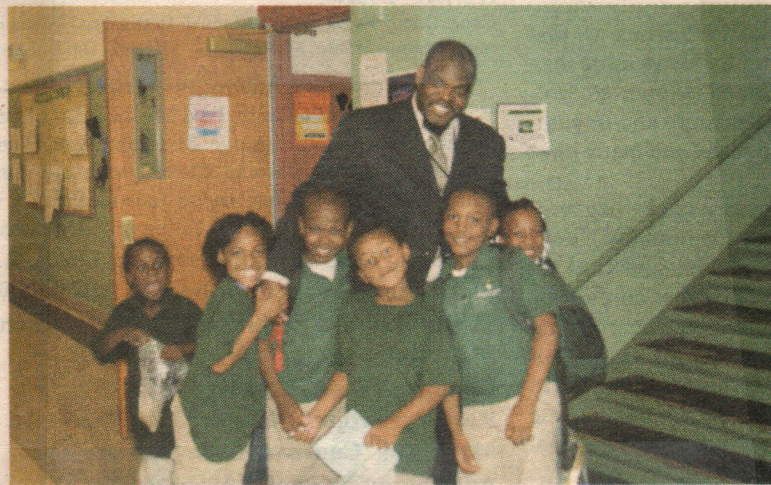
been an 11% increase in Howland Charter students who met or exceeded state standards on the ISAT in 2007 versus 2009. The daily attendance of the school is 95%. Plus, the cost per pupil at Howland Charter is \$9,050, which is nearly \$5,000 less than students at some Chicago public

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schools, proving that "the charter model allows you to do more with less." Its students have also earned various awards,

including presidential awards and citizenship awards.

For more information about Howland Charter and Catalyst, go to <http://www.catalystschoools.org>.



Principal Dr. Chaun Johnson with students of Catalyst Howard Charter School