

Higher Achievement Communications Guide



**HIGHER
ACHIEVEMENT**

Table of Contents

Page	
3	An introduction on messaging
4	Revisiting of our mission, vision, and impact
5	An outline of key stakeholders
6-11	A stakeholder value chart
12	A message platform
14-17	A deeper dive into tailoring messages for scholars, schools, mentors, and donors
18	Key terms and phrases
19	Key data points
20-27	Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none">Three DoorwaysPress ReleaseEvent AnnouncementGrant IntroductionEmail Introduction
28-29	Exercises <ul style="list-style-type: none">Three DoorwaysElevator Speech

INTRODUCTION

Every brand needs a voice. Messaging provides the words and ideas that help give Higher Achievement our voice.

Specifically, messaging ensures that the public understands two things related to Higher Achievement's values:

1. What Higher Achievement values
2. The value that Higher Achievement provides

Organizations use a message platform to make sure every staff member is on the same page when he or she communicates about their work.

Think of this document as a toolkit that is filled with words, sayings, and ways to communicate about Higher Achievement. We know that the same message may not work for both scholars and donors. Likewise, the message that resonates with mentors may be different from the one that sticks with school partners. Therefore, the purpose of this document is to give you a variety of options that you can use to tell the Higher Achievement story.

How did we get here?

Starting with a communications plan in 2006 and ending with a branding working group in 2015, Higher Achievement has done a lot of work internally and externally to arrive at a consensus on our messaging. A brief timeline is below:

2006	Higher Achievement forms a communications plan
2011	Higher Achievement hires communications consultants The Glover Park Group to help refine our vision, mission, and impact statements
2012	Higher Achievement completes a strategic planning process with Community Wealth Partners and begins rolling out a new growth strategy and vision for impact
2013	Higher Achievement undergoes extensive internal interviews with branding consultants PluPerfect to begin building a message platform
2014-2015	Higher Achievement forms a Branding and Communications Working Group that consists of branding experts, staff members, board members, school partners, and funders to dive into: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Building message architectures that visually represent what's currently being said about Higher Achievement.2. Creating a stakeholder values chart with input from all stakeholders represented3. Testing four different messages (via an online qualitative and quantitative survey) with 95 participants ranging from staff to alumni to foundations to current scholars and families to mentors to schools and districts to media to board members.

INTRODUCTION

To form a message platform, you must have a strong vision, mission, and impact.

Our Vision

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. We envision a world where all students' potential and promise are realized, regardless of their circumstances.

Our Mission

Higher Achievement closes the opportunity gap during the pivotal middle school years. By leveraging the power of communities, Higher Achievement's proven model provides a rigorous year-round learning environment, caring role models, and a culture of high expectations, resulting in college-bound scholars with the character, confidence, and skills to succeed.

Our Impact

Higher Achievement creates lasting change – putting individual students on a path to success, breaking the cycle of poverty for families, and strengthening the social fabric of communities:

Scholars go on to high school, college, and careers – becoming engaged citizens, active leaders, and change agents in their school and communities

Families are given the knowledge and tools to advocate for their children – making their voices heard in their schools, challenging the status quo in their communities, and changing the education landscape for all children

Mentors build awareness about education and middle school youth and mobilize networks of people – from corporations to individuals – who otherwise would not be involved in education issues

Schools are impacted by scholar success in the classroom – Higher Achievement scholars “raise the bar” for academics, behavior, and social skills among their peers

Communities embrace a dramatic shift – a culture where high achievement is the norm and anything less is unacceptable

INTRODUCTION

Before diving into our message platform, it's helpful to think about our stakeholders (aka our "audiences").

Higher Achievement has a wide range of stakeholders who are invested in our organization. These include:



STAKEHOLDER VALUE CHART

Each of these stakeholders has their own set of values and ideas about what they are seeking from a potential partner, program, or grantee.

Where Higher Achievement's approach aligns with a stakeholder's values is called an RTB – a reason to believe in Higher Achievement.

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Corporate Partners	<p>Return on Investment (ROI): developing the future workforce, clear data-driven results for Higher Achievement success</p> <p>Positive reputation among their peers and in the broader community</p> <p>Alignment with their social value proposition (to their customers)</p> <p>Turnkey opportunities to have employees volunteer – one time and as weekly mentors. This builds volunteer skills and camaraderie, as well as attractiveness for job seekers.</p> <p>Authentic connection to scholars and the mission</p> <p>Investments in communities where their organizations are located</p> <p>Branding opportunities</p> <p>Building connections to other companies and growing their network</p>	<p>Higher Achievement is proven to increase high school graduation rates.</p> <p>95% of scholars graduate high school on time, nearly double the rate of their peers.</p> <p>Witnessing a scholar at events – Love Poems, Green Apples, Gala.</p> <p>At \$7/hour per scholar, it's a good buy and offers a good return on investment.</p> <p>The dollars are being spent frugally and going to programming.</p> <p>Higher Achievement has been validated by other supporters and people they trust.</p> <p>Strong staff members who are easy to work with.</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Foundations	<p>Alignment with their Board-driven priorities</p> <p>Strong grantee performance against goals</p> <p>Strong leadership – staff and board</p> <p>Meeting a need in their community</p> <p>An organization that effectively partners with others to effect greater change than can be accomplished alone.</p>	<p>Proven results – both annually and through our RCT (randomized control trial study)</p> <p>Robust program model with research-proven best practices</p> <p>Effective tours, led by scholars</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Individual Donors	<p>Knowing that they can make a specific, positive impact with their giving</p> <p>Feeling good about connecting with an engaging organization and the people it serves</p> <p>Data driven organizations that also provide a good return on investment</p> <p>Ability to impact individual children in their communities</p> <p>A network of community champions</p> <p>Believing their contribution – no matter how little/big – counts</p> <p>Giving to an organization that aligns to their personal beliefs and value system</p> <p>Giving to a trusted source – someone they know says is a good organization</p>	<p>Every 26 seconds, a student drops out of high school in the US. That's 7,000 students a day.</p> <p>Middle school matters. Grades 5-8 are the last, best chance to get on track to graduate high school.</p> <p>Scholar stories</p> <p>Meeting scholars and seeing how impressive they are</p> <p>Proof of impact in donors' high-need communities</p> <p>Giving the gift of education</p> <p>Proven results – both annually and through our RCT (randomized control trial study)</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Scholars and Families	<p>Improving academic performance and feeling supported and safe. A sense of “family,” where they matter as individuals.</p> <p>Making learning fun and exciting to increase engagement in and beyond the classroom (career exposure, etc.)</p> <p>Exposure to – and prep for – top high schools and college</p> <p>Meeting new friends and families – being a part of something meaningful</p> <p>Building confidence and leadership</p> <p>Having mentors and role models</p> <p>Getting on track - and staying on track - for college</p>	<p>Higher Achievement connects talent to opportunities, including 3 mentors per week and other positive role models.</p> <p>Higher Achievement is valued at \$5,000 per year per scholar, but is free for families.</p> <p>Scholars commit to an additional 650 extra hours of learning per year through Afterschool Academy and Summer Academy.</p> <p>It works. Students are making academic progress, they are more self-confident and behavior and attendance is improving.</p> <p>95% of scholars go to top high schools and graduate from high school</p> <p>Higher Achievement provides intentional culture-building activities, including field trips, public speaking platforms, electives, and college visits.</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Mentors	<p>A place where you go to get away from your job and spend meaningful time with hard-working youth (the same scholars every week)</p> <p>Making a difference in your community in an organized, well-supported way.</p> <p>Meeting like-minded fellow mentors</p>	<p>Every 26 seconds, a student drops out of high school in the US. That's 7,000 students a day.</p> <p>Middle school matters. Grades 5-8 are the last, best chance to get on track to graduate high school.</p> <p>95% of Higher Achievement scholars graduate high school on time.</p> <p>Higher Achievement connects talent to opportunities, including 3 mentors per week.</p> <p>Mentors make a measurable difference.</p> <p>Each week, mentors can see the progress in their mentees.</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Schools and Districts	<p>A place where motivated scholars go to improve their study habits and academic performance</p> <p>A place where scholars, especially minority scholars, are being prepped for honors or Advanced Placement coursework, graduation, college and career.</p> <p>Strong culture of hard work, curiosity, voice, and fun in learning.</p> <p>Field trips, college trips, mentors, family engagement</p> <p>A program that complements and supports what the schools are doing in the classroom.</p> <p>Good partnerships – especially in the OST and extended day area.</p> <p>Evaluation-driven organizations that focus on improving metrics that matter to schools (including test scores, grades, and attendance).</p> <p>For some, a program aligned to Common Core curriculum</p>	<p>Higher Achievement has 50% of the impact of Harlem Children’s Zone, KIPP, etc. with ¼ of the cost.</p> <p>Higher Achievement costs less than \$7/hour per scholar and provides a “second shift” of educators who partner with teachers.</p> <p>Starting in fifth grade, Higher Achievement connects each student with 3 mentors per week that will be with them until they graduate in the 8th grade.</p> <p>Scholars commit to an additional 650 extra hours of learning per year through Afterschool Academy and Summer Academy.</p> <p>A recent RCT found that Higher Achievement is the equivalent of 48 extra days of learning in math and 30 extra days in reading. This study have been externally validated by the What Works Clearinghouse.</p> <p>It works. Students are making academic progress, they are more self-confident and behavior and attendance is improving.</p> <p>Higher Achievement activates community members and corporate partners to care about local schools.</p> <p>Higher Achievement allows students to perform in high-profile events, such as Love Out Loud</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Government	<p>Better educated kids = economic growth, community harmony, happier voters</p> <p>Volunteer mentors are more civically engaged than average citizens</p> <p>Collective impact in communities that is working</p> <p>Public and private partnerships. Shared funding and shared responsibilities.</p>	<p>Nimble, low-cost effective program</p> <p>High school dropouts can expect to earn just over 5 percent of what a typical graduate will make over the course of their lifetime.</p> <p>95% of Higher Achievement scholars graduate high school on time.</p> <p>When compared to more comprehensive interventions like teacher quality, charter schools or whole neighborhood improvement, Higher Achievement's operating costs are significantly lower. Higher Achievement has 50% of the impact of Harlem Children's Zone, KIPP, etc. with 1/4 of the cost.</p>

Audience	What They Value (aka What They Are Seeking)	What is Their Reason to Believe (RTB) in Higher Achievement?
Staff	<p>Making a difference in the lives of students, especially those who might not otherwise have opportunities.</p> <p>A positive workplace culture</p> <p>Being recognized for their efforts and results</p> <p>Feeling valued as members of a team</p> <p>Being associated with a strong organization with a good reputation</p> <p>Opportunities for professional growth and professional development</p>	<p>Higher Achievement values things that other organizations may not: serving students, forming partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, and positively impacting communities.</p> <p>Higher Achievement works. 95% of scholars graduate high school on time.</p> <p>The culture at Higher Achievement is almost impossible to describe, but is palpable once you join the team. A combination of spirit, excellence, and collaboration, it is the "special sauce" of Higher Achievement.</p>

Message Platform

A message platform includes four ideas to help guide conversations - whether they are in-person, online, short, long, with strangers or with your closest friends:

PREMISE: the landscape

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not.

BRAND POSITION: what we stand for

All students have potential and Higher Achievement creates opportunities for them to thrive

GOALS: what we are trying to accomplish

We envision a world where all students' potential and promise are realized, regardless of their circumstances.

APPROACH: how we achieve our goals

We provide an intensive academic afterschool and summer program that helps middle school students reach their full potential in high school, college, and beyond.

LIVING THE MISSION: our call to action

Join us as we help students realize their potential. Mentor, apply, or donate today.

Our Brand Is:

Caring

compassionate and supportive

embracing of the scholar,
not just academics

Rigorous

results-oriented and measured

grounded in reality and
proven studies

Inspiring

focused on the bigger picture
and purpose

positive and able to connect
emotionally

Transformative

driven and action-oriented

emphasizing life-changing
impact at the individual, family,
and community level

TARGETING OUR MESSAGES BY FOUR KEY AUDIENCES: SCHOLARS

SCHOLARS	Core Message	Stakeholder Adaptation
Brand Position	All students have potential and Higher Achievement creates opportunities for them to thrive.	Higher Achievement believes that you are a talented, smart, and capable student. If you work hard and have the right opportunities, you will succeed.
Goals	We envision a world where all students' potential and promise are realized, regardless of their circumstance.	By participating in Higher Achievement, you will build academic skills, gain self-confidence and prepare for success in high school, college and beyond.
Approach	We provide an intensive academic afterschool and summer program that helps middle school students reach their full potential in high school, college, and beyond.	Higher Achievement asks students like you to commit to 650 additional hours each year for four years. This extra time after school (called "Afterschool Academy") is used to help you with homework, provide you three academic mentors/week, and support you with the high school placement process. Summer Academy is used to teach lessons in math, literature, science, and social studies, and also includes field trips and college visits. Higher Achievement works. 95% of our scholars graduate from high school on time.
Living the Role	Join us as we help students realize their potential. Mentor, apply, or donate today.	There are three steps to apply: 1. Visit higherachievement.org 2. Fill out an application 3. Schedule an interview Your commitment to Higher Achievement will pay off. You'll have fun and build lasting relationships while learning.

TARGETING OUR MESSAGES BY FOUR KEY AUDIENCES: **SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS**

SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS	Core Message	Stakeholder Adaptation
Brand Position	All students have potential and Higher Achievement creates opportunities for them to thrive.	Higher Achievement believes that schools and expanded learning providers can partner to ensure that students have increased opportunities to accelerate achievement.
Goals	We envision a world where all students' potential and promise are realized, regardless of their circumstance.	Our goals are both the same; we are both passionate about preparing students for success in high school, college, and beyond.
Approach	We provide an intensive academic afterschool and summer program that helps middle school students reach their full potential in high school, college, and beyond.	<p>Higher Achievement partners with schools like you to help us provide Afterschool Academy and Summer Academy to 5th-8th grade students.</p> <p>In addition to allowing Higher Achievement to use your facility as a host site, this partnership requires: a) true alignment and regular communication between Higher Achievement staff and school staff and b) collaboration on data to track progress of scholars c) funding.</p> <p>We are interested in working closely with your school leadership to best support your goals – not only for those scholars in Higher Achievement but also for the whole school community.</p> <p>Higher Achievement works. 95% of our scholars graduate from high school.</p>
Living the Role	Join us as we help students realize their potential. Mentor, apply, or donate today.	Your commitment to Higher Achievement is essential in reaching our common goals.

TARGETING OUR MESSAGES BY FOUR KEY AUDIENCES: MENTORS

MENTORS	Core Message	Stakeholder Adaptation
Brand Position	All students have potential and Higher Achievement creates opportunities for them to thrive.	Higher Achievement believes that people like you can make a difference in your community.
Goals	We envision a world where all students' potential and promise are realized, regardless of their circumstance.	<p>Middle school is the last, best chance to get on track to college. Higher Achievement intervenes at this uniquely critical time with a proven program.</p> <p>Imagine spending each week making a difference in the life of a middle school student. Middle school students need positive role models and opportunities in their lives and you can help provide that for them.</p>
Approach	We provide an intensive academic afterschool and summer program that helps middle school students reach their full potential in high school, college, and beyond.	<p>Higher Achievement recruits mentors like you to work with scholars two hours per week, one night a week. Mentoring with Higher Achievement requires a greater commitment than most volunteer programs, but also offers a greater reward. By working with the same students week after week, you will be able to see their progress and celebrate their successes with them.</p> <p>Higher Achievement provides necessary curriculum for your math, literature or seminar lessons. You will also have trainings and support along the way.</p>
Living the Role	Join us as we help students realize their potential. Mentor, apply, or donate today.	<p>Thank you for what you are doing to support our Higher Achievement scholars.</p> <p>We need one mentor for every scholar we serve. Your commitment is essential to reaching our common goals.</p>

TARGETING OUR MESSAGES BY FOUR KEY AUDIENCES: **DONORS**

DONORS	Core Message	Stakeholder Adaptation
Brand Position	All students have potential and Higher Achievement creates opportunities for them to thrive.	All students deserve a good education. We believe we need each other to ensure that all students have a fair chance to graduate on time and succeed in life.
Goals	We envision a world where all students' potential and promise are realized, regardless of their circumstance.	We both recognize the need for programs that get results and can show how they are making a difference in individual lives, as well as communities.
Approach	We provide an intensive academic afterschool and summer program that helps middle school students reach their full potential in high school, college, and beyond.	Higher Achievement partners with [people], [foundations], [companies] like you who care about making a difference in their community and want to support an organization with a proven track record. Middle school is the last, best chance to get on track to college. Higher Achievement intervenes at this uniquely critical time with a proven program.
Living the Role	Join us as we help students realize their potential. Mentor, apply, or donate today.	Higher Achievement has a wide range of ways to support our scholars: center sponsorships; one-time or recurring individual donations; and event sponsorships. Individual donors: By supporting Higher Achievement, you will help students realize their potential. Corporate donors: By supporting Higher Achievement, you will build a positive image and boost morale. Foundations: By supporting Higher Achievement, you will align yourself with a proven leader in the field.

Key Terms and Phrases

Achievement Center: the school/host partner where Afterschool Academy and Summer Academy is held

Afterschool Academy: the time immediately following the school day when Higher Achievement staff and mentors work with scholars. Segments include: homework help, electives, dinner, community meeting, mentoring, gathering time

Electives: one segment of Afterschool and Summer Academy. Activities vary, but may include: basketball, yoga, knitting/quilting, drumline, Step. Electives can be led by external partners or Higher Achievement staff.

High School Placement: a programmatic component of Higher Achievement. Services vary by affiliate, but include essay writing, interview preparation, and assistance finding the best high school or program.

Mentor: our volunteers who teach math, literature, or seminar curricula during Afterschool Academy

Program: Afterschool Academy, Summer Academy, High School Placement

Scholar Introduction: a Higher Achievement scholar always introduces himself or herself by: standing up, making eye contact, shaking hands, saying his or her name, what achievement center he or she is from, and his or her grade.

Scholars: the middle school students that we serve

Seminar: one option of curricula taught by mentors. Seminars vary in topic, but include: robotics, kitchen sink science, financial literacy, public oratory, conflict resolution, and speech writing. Some seminar curricula is led by external instructors from partner organizations.

Shout-Out: Higher Achievement's way of recognizing when someone has gone out of their way. Typically given for one of Higher Achievement's four social justice pillars; solidarity, justice, voice, freedom, or four culture principles; respect, excellence, collaboration, spirit.

Strategic Plan: Higher Achievement's long-term plan that includes three rings: direct service, impact, and influence. Direct service: scholars that are enrolled in Higher Achievement; Impact: Higher Achievement's work relating to students at schools served by Higher Achievement; Influence: Higher Achievement's work beyond the walls of schools served by Higher Achievement.

Summer Academy: six weeks during the summer when scholars attend Higher Achievement. Segments include: 18 four days a week of math, literature, social studies, science, and elective classes; weekly educational field trips; and day and overnight college trips.

Key Data Points

Importance of Middle School:

- Every 26 seconds a student drops out of high school
- 50% of students who drop out of high school do so right after middle school in ninth grade
- Those who drop out of high school are more than twice as likely as college graduates to live in poverty

Higher Achievement-Specific Data:

- 95% of Higher Achievement scholars graduate high school on-time
- A recent randomized trial study shows that gains from participation in Higher Achievement equaled 48 extra school days in math and 30 extra school days in reading
- 65% of Higher Achievement scholars either improve their grades or maintain A's and B's.

Higher Achievement Baltimore Data (2013-2014):

- 57% of Higher Achievement scholars maintained an A/B average in math
- 48% maintained an A/B average in reading
- 86% of scholars improved their attendance or maintained fewer than 5 absences.

Higher Achievement DC Metro Data (2013-2014):

- 73% of scholars either improved their math grade or maintained an A/B average
- 75% of scholars either improved their reading grade or maintained an A/B average
- 86% of scholars returned to Higher Achievement

Higher Achievement Pittsburgh Data (2013-2014):

- 70% of scholars showed gains in reading
- 75% of scholars showed gains in math

Higher Achievement Richmond Data (2013-2014):

- 66% of scholars improved their attendance or maintained fewer than 5 absences
- 69% of scholars reduced their number of tardies or maintained fewer than 5 tardies
- 67% of scholars improved their math grades at least 1 full letter grade or maintained an A/B average (69% reading)
- 65% of scholars improved their SOL scores or maintained Advanced/Proficient (59% in reading)

APPLICATIONS: Three Doorways

When having a conversation – either in person or via email – about Higher Achievement, it's helpful to think of three doorways that you can open to start your dialogue.

These three doorways are:

Scholar Story

Approach

Results

Examples:

Scholar Story

I'd like to answer your question by sharing a quick story about a scholar named Charles View. Charles grew up in the Columbia Heights neighborhood in DC, where only 38% of high school students graduate. His neighborhood had gangs, vacant buildings, and violence. For a kid like Charles, who was bright and asked a lot of questions and was ridiculed for it, middle school was a critical turning point where he could either join the neighborhood boys or double down on academics. In seventh grade, Charles joined Higher Achievement and found other kids like him - he describes Higher Achievement as a second family. His grades got better and he accepted a full-ride to a private high school when he graduated from Higher Achievement. He went on to graduate from Morehouse College, but through high school and college he stayed connected to Higher Achievement as an intern. Today, he works in residential real estate, which he credits to wanting to improve communities – like Higher Achievement did for his own community of Columbia Heights.

Approach

Higher Achievement is an afterschool and summer academic enrichment program that connects motivated middle school students to opportunities. Higher Achievement students – called “scholars” – spend an additional 650 hours (or 100 school days) per year working with staff and mentors on their academics. In return for their commitment, scholars form lasting relationships with staff and mentors, boost their grades, and build self-confidence. It's the combination of rigor (mentoring, 100 extra days of learning, data-driven results) and culture (relationships, high standards and high support, self-confidence) that make Higher Achievement truly unique.

Results

Higher Achievement is an academic program where 95% of graduates go on to graduate high school. The combination of academic rigor and a culture that fosters lasting relationships between scholars, mentors, and staff creates a truly unique program that works. In fact, Higher Achievement recently underwent an external randomized trial study that found they were among the first out of school time to have an impact on test scores. Only 2% of organizations do this sort of study – and even fewer have significant results.

APPLICATIONS: DC Metro Press Release

Page 1

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 24, 2014

CONTACT: Jackie Ross
(202) 375-7729
jross@higherachievement.org

GOING PLACES GALA RAISES \$1.275 MILLION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS FROM UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Record breaking support spurs creation of two new Achievement Centers in Wards 7 & 8 serving 100 more scholars

Washington, D.C. – On Thursday, October 23, Higher Achievement hosted its 7th annual Going Places Gala at the Warner Theatre. Over 800 business and community leaders joined together with Higher Achievement scholars, staff, and champions to celebrate a remarkable year of growth for Higher Achievement and to honor the supporters who made it possible.

Chaired by Mitchell N. Schear, President of Vornado/Charles E. Smith, the gala raised a record-breaking \$1,275,000 to support Higher Achievement's scholars. As a result of this support, more scholars than ever will benefit from Higher Achievement's after school and summer programming in the Washington, DC, region.

"Let's face it: the middle school years are tough. In fact, they're the time when students are most likely to fall off track for high school graduation and college," said Katherine Roboff, Higher Achievement DC Metro's Executive Director. "In our nation's capital, we have one of the lowest high school graduation rates in the country, about 64%. But, at Higher Achievement, we turn those pivotal middle school years into a time of opportunity and a springboard for success. After participating in our year-round programming after school and in the summer, 95% of our scholars graduate from high school, on time and college-ready."

DOORWAYS:
Approach
Results

APPLICATIONS: DC Metro Press Release

Page 2

“Through the direct support of the gala sponsors, Higher Achievement added an additional 100 students to its rosters in Wards 7 and 8,” said Mitchell Schear. “Higher Achievement is providing a gold standard, academic program for students who need it most in DC. All you have to do is meet a Higher Achievement scholar to see what a good investment this is for the community,” he added.

Event co-chairs include Douglas Donatelli (First Potomac Realty Trust), Nora Dweck-McMullen (Dweck Family Foundation), James Davis (Davis Construction), Meredith LaPier (CBRE), Barry Nigro (Fried Frank), Debra Lehman-Smith (Lehman Smith McLeish, PLLC), and Ron Paul (EagleBank).

DOORWAY:
Scholar Story

David Opong-Wadee, a 24-year-old alumnus speaker described some of his mentors when he was a scholar at Higher Achievement, “You believed in me, and you invested in me at a critical time.” Despite seeing his peers take others paths, David benefited from the support of Higher Achievement and went on to graduate from Grinnell College. He currently works on Capitol Hill as a Legislative Assistant. David concluded his remarks by thanking the donors in the audience, “Tonight, I want to tell you that your investment has paid off.”

BRAND
POSITION

About Higher Achievement

All students have potential and need opportunities to thrive. Higher Achievement’s rigorous afterschool and summer academic program connects middle school students to opportunities ranging from a year-round learning environment to caring role models to a culture of high expectations. As a result, 95% of Higher Achievement scholars graduate high school with the the character, confidence, and skills to succeed.

APPROACH

Founded in 1975, Higher Achievement DC Metro provides award-winning academic enrichment to almost 600 motivated middle school students from under-served communities in the Washington region.

###

APPLICATIONS: Baltimore Event Announcement

Join Us for Our 6th Annual Love Out Loud!

What is Love Out Loud?

For one night only, middle school students from all three achievement centers will take to the Walters Art Museum stage to share their original works of poetry. The 6th Annual Love Out Loud performance is marks the culmination of months of hard work and preparation. After study and practice, scholars write their own love-themed poems and perform their poems for their achievement center community. Fifteen finalists then advance to showcase their literary talents at the Love Out Loud performance. Join us and be reminded that talent is all around us!

APPROACH

BRAND
POSITION

When?

Wednesday, March 25, 2015
Door Open at 5:30pm
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM - Performance
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM - Reception

Where?

The Walters Art Museum
600 N Charles St., Baltimore, MD

How Can I Attend?

Tickets can be purchased at <https://baltimoreloveoutloud.eventbrite.com>.
For sponsorship information, please contact Brooke Thayer at bthayer@higherachievement.org or 410-752-7753.

APPLICATIONS: Richmond Grant Introduction

Page 1

1. Please submit your description of need and target population. Limit up to 4000 characters. (2,641 used).

GOALS

Richmond's low-income youth do not have equal educational opportunities. They lack essential resources for academic learning during the summer and after school that more-resourced families and communities are able to provide. School teachers in Richmond's high-poverty neighborhoods do not have the capacity to provide critical, individualized attention, and rigorous, out-of-school time learning opportunities to children who are motivated to learn.

In 2011, Higher Achievement opened two achievement centers, serving middle school students from Richmond's Northside and Southside. At the request of Richmond Public Schools, Higher Achievement Centers are based at Henderson and Boushall Middle Schools. Both are Title I Priority schools (nearly 100% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals) and are currently "schools in improvement" because neither has made Adequate Yearly Progress (a measurement of the No Child Left Behind Act) for several years.

Higher Achievement targets its proven programming in under-resourced neighborhoods: 75% of Higher Achievement scholars come from households with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (93% from households with annual incomes under \$40,000). 95% of scholars are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARM), a standard measure of poverty, and 77% of scholars live in a single-parent household. 83% of scholar parents do not have a college degree, with 14% lacking a high school diploma. Almost all of our scholars will be first generation college attendees.

Lacking support, low-income children are ten times more likely than their affluent peers to drop out of high school. According to Richmond Public Schools, the majority of dropouts occur in 9th grade because students are ill prepared for the rigor and pressures of high school. Two-thirds of the 9th grade achievement gap can be explained by uneven summer learning opportunities. Only 66% of children from economically disadvantaged families in Richmond earn standard or advanced high school diplomas within four years. This number drops to 59% for African-American students and 19% for Latinos. Higher Achievement works with these scholars to address these risk factors and creates lasting change by putting individual students on a path to success.

APPROACH

The common thread among Higher Achievement scholars, regardless of whether their current GPA is closer to an F or an A, is motivation. They want to improve academically and are willing to make a significant year-round, multi-year commitment to the program in order to be on the college track by the eighth grade and be college-ready by the time they graduate from high school.

APPLICATIONS: Richmond Grant Introduction

Page 2

2. Please submit your program description. Limit up to 4000 characters. (3,974 used).

Founded in 1975 in Washington, DC as a grassroots effort to create learning opportunities for children in low-income neighborhoods, Higher Achievement has impacted the lives of more than 10,000 young people. Higher Achievement's model is guided by leading research that identifies middle school as a student's "last, best chance to succeed." ACT's "The Forgotten Middle" 2008 study indicates that, "Under current conditions, the level of academic achievement that students attain by 8th grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school." This critical period is also characterized by an "achievement dip": grades and test scores plummet; students disengage and experiment with unhealthy behaviors; school attendance drops, and violence increases. The middle school "achievement dip" is more pronounced in low-income communities wherein middle schoolers lack the resources to reverse this downward spiral. This imperative drives Higher Achievement to intervene at the transition to middle school with a proven, year-round, multi-year program for underserved young people who want to go to college and are willing to work hard to get there. Our proven program quality and success has made Higher Achievement a model of academic out-of-school time programming. Evaluations of The After School Corporation, LA BEST, and San Francisco Beacon all find that academic changes occur only when students participate for more than one year (Reisner et. Al, 2002; Huang et al, 2000; and Walker and Arbreton, 2003). This research indicates that dosage (year-round programming) and retention (more than one year in a program) are critical program attributes. Furthermore, research generally shows that youth who attend programs with high levels of intensity (at least three days per week and multiple hours per day) have more positive outcomes (Public/Private Ventures. "Putting It All Together: Guiding Principles for Quality Afterschool Programs Serving Preteens").

APPROACH

Higher Achievement's model provides youth with 650 hours a year of academic opportunities unmatched in most out-of-school time programs. Scholars join Higher Achievement as a rising 5th or 6th graders during Summer Academy and stay with the program until they graduate from the 8th grade. During the 2014-2015 program year, Higher Achievement will engage 185 5th-8th grade scholars in our proven year around model:

APPROACH

APPLICATIONS: Richmond Grant Introduction

Page 3

APPROACH

Afterschool Academy (October 2014 – May 2015): For 27 weeks, three evenings per week, 3:00–7:30pm, scholars receive homework coaching, an elective, dinner, and two hours of intensive small-group academic mentoring in math, literature, and seminars. Every week, each scholar works with three different mentors who provide high-quality academic instruction using Higher Achievement’s curriculum. These mentors also build scholar character by demonstrating positive behavior and success. As research shows, young adults who have a strong mentoring relationship during adolescence exhibit significantly better outcomes in the areas of high-school completion and college attendance, as well as mental health and problem behavior (Rhodes and DuBois, Mentoring Relationships and Programs for Youth).

Summer Academy (June–August 2015): For six weeks, Monday–Thursday, 8:00am–4:00pm, scholars receive math, science, social studies, and literature instruction, and an elective, such as music or art as well as breakfast and lunch. Higher Achievement delivers curricula, correlated to national and state standards, of the grade level scholars will be entering in the fall, and leverages engaging strategies such as project-based learning and peer working groups to bring learning to life in the summer months. As a result, the program not only combats summer learning loss (up to 2–3 months of school learning is lost each summer by low-income students), but also strengthens areas of academic weakness.

APPLICATIONS: Pittsburgh Email Introduction

Hello Dr. Edwards,

I am hoping we might meet to discuss a partnership between the Urban League Charter School and Higher Achievement.

Higher Achievement is a college-track preparatory afterschool and summer program for middle school students primarily from the Hill District and Homewood communities of Pittsburgh. Our scholars start with us the summer before 5th or 6th grade and stay with us year-round through 8th grade promotion. When they do, 95% graduate high school. Also, just recently, Higher Achievement became the only expanded learning program in the country to receive the competitive i3 (Investing In Innovation) validation grant from the U.S. Department of Education (see <http://www.higherachievement.org/news/blog/higher-achievement-to-receive-i3-grant-from-the-dept-of-education/>).

DOORWAY:
Approach

DOORWAY:
Results

The Urban League Charter School does a fantastic job of helping your students perform at or above grade level. Since students leave your school after 5th grade, I am hoping you are interested in working with us to connect them to Higher Achievement as a way to maintain all the fantastic progress you made with them and keep them on track for success in post-secondary education regardless of where they end up in 6th - 12th grades. To that end, could we schedule a time for me to meet with you to discuss a potential partnership between Higher Achievement and Urban League Charter School and hopefully then be able to recruit your 4th and 5th grade students for our upcoming 2015 Summer Academy?

Our missions are closely aligned. Yours is to provide superior education that will develop academic excellence, leadership skills, positive contributors to the community in which they live, and society as a whole, and ours is connect talent to opportunity. I look forward to working with you to make sure all the gains you produce in the elementary school are maintained and strengthened during the middle school transition so that your students launch into high school with the confidence, character, and academic skills to be successful through post-secondary graduation as well.

GOALS

Please let me know a convenient time when we might meet. I look forward to working with you!

Wendy Etheridge Smith, Executive Director

Exercise #1/ Real Life Example

#1: “THREE DOORWAYS” STORYTELLING SAMPLE

Build out your own answer to “What is Higher Achievement?” for each of the three doorways below:

SCHOLAR STORY:

APPROACH:

RESULTS:

Exercise #2/ Real Life Example

#2: ELEVATOR SPEECH

Now, using one of your three doorways, answer the question, “What is Higher Achievement” in 5-10 seconds (the time it takes you to take an elevator).