



# ACADEMY FOR CAREER EXPLORATION

RIGOROUS ACADEMICS. CARING ADULTS. COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE.

Volume 3 Issue 1

FALL 2011

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ACE inspires students to achieve their greatest potential by providing a supportive, customized learning experience that forms the foundation for career and life goals.
- Students gain an appreciation for the work environment through community service assignments (100 hours during their freshman and sophomore years), and internships and paid employment opportunities during their junior and senior years.
- All incoming 9th graders attend a five week summer program in preparation for the beginning of their ACE career.
- Our two Pathways Programs allow students to earn either a CNA or a national certification in hotel and lodging management.
- Historically, ACE'S four-year graduation rate has consistently topped 90 percent.
- 75 percent of our students continue postsecondary education immediately after high school.



## MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL

*"We may have changed our name and our look, but rest assured, we remain committed to our mission and values."*

Lawrence E. DeSalvatore, Jr. PhD  
CEO/Head of School  
Academy for Career Exploration (ACE)

**GONE:** The Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy name, the TCCA acronym and the burgundy shirts.

**NEW:** The Academy for Career Exploration, a new acronym (ACE) and navy blue shirts.

**REMAINING THE SAME:** Our commitment to providing the same rigorous academic program and opportunities for Providence high school students to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to make wise career and life choices.

The publication of this newsletter marks another milestone in the evolution of Rhode Island's first public charter school. As we transition to a new name, a new logo and new school colors, I can unequivocally say that the faculty and staff continue to provide the supportive and nurturing environment that is at the heart of this school.

Why the change? Last spring Textron, Inc., the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce and the school agreed that a name change at this point in our history might better capture our mission, and open up new fundraising opportunities. With the input from our school staff, family and partners, we opened this school year as the Academy for Career Exploration (ACE).

These remain difficult times and challenging times for our young people. Unemployment is high, resources are scarce and the skill levels needed to succeed continue to rise. We remain true to our course of preparing ACE students for higher education and additional training and in providing the strong academic and skill foundations which make any career choice possible.

We continue to implement programs that expand and enhance our commitment. Last year, six of our graduating students received Certified Nursing Assistant Certificates (CNA) with their diplomas. This summer, we piloted a program in conjunction with CCRI and Stepping Up that will result in eight of our students from the class of 2012 in the Healthcare & Science Career Pathway earning their CNA certificates. (See related story in this issue). Five of our students earned American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute Lodging Management Certificates as part of the Hospitality & Business Management Career Pathway.

And this year, recognizing that our freshman would benefit from more individualized support as they transition to high school, we are piloting the Freshman Academy. (See related story in this issue). Also in this issue, we welcome a new member to our faculty, Elizabeth (Beth) Kehew, feature a veteran faculty member, Brian Smith, and begin a new column called, "Where Are They Now?", focusing on our alumni.

We look forward to this year of rededication and renewal—the raising of the curtain, if you will, on the next decade of our commitment to Providence children and welcome you to be part of this very special year.



Left to right: President of the ACE Board, Paul Racicot; Executive Director of the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools, Steve Nardelli; Healthcare & Science Career Pathway Coordinator, Nicolette Ciano; and Dean of Students, Rochelle Baker, listen to (right) Susan Lusi, superintendent of Providence Public School System at event announcing ACE's new name.

**FRESHMAN ACADEMY** With the beginning of this school year, ACE has instituted a new program focused on ensuring success and providing a jump-start for freshman in developing their life and leadership skills.

National data support the importance of extended schooling in achieving success, especially for minority and low-income students. This year ACE is piloting a Freshman Academy that is focused on providing extra support on Saturdays and after school to the entire freshman class. Led by Dean of Students Michael Shepard, acting as the Saturday seminar coordinator, and English teacher Denise Burke as teacher leader, ACE freshman will participate in a range of activities to assist in their transition from middle to high school.

Saturday Seminar will meet two Saturday mornings a month, beginning in October. The Academy's activities, however, are already underway. Teachers meet once a week to discuss goals, lessons, assignments, emerging obstacles and other issues affecting ninth graders. This year, all ninth graders will eat lunch together, separate from tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders, to encourage bonding and communications skills.

The Saturday curriculum will include special writing assignments; high level motivational speakers representing a broad array of disciplines; and focused leadership and confidence building exercises, including a weekend on the Alton Jones Campus of URI in the "Challenge by Choice" training program. Students will also be provided with experiences in conflict resolution and homework help and assisted with personal social and emotional growth issues. The new Freshman Academy is designed to help students bridge the often difficult leap from middle to high school smoothly and successfully. Parents and guardians of freshmen will be included in some of the activities.

The quantifiable objectives of the Freshman Academy include:

- Annual student attendance for the freshman call for SY2012 will be 98 percent.
- Student attendance rate for Freshman Saturday Seminar for SY2012 will be 90 percent.
- All ACE freshmen who complete SY2012 will advance to grade 10 in September 2012.
- All students in the Class of 2015 will demonstrate growth in reading and mathematics by earning change scores (September to June) on Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) tests, representing a gain of at least one grade level. Thirty (30) percent of the members of the class will demonstrate growth of more than one grade level.

## PATHWAYS UPDATE

**ACE has been notified that its application for funds from the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Program, Initiative, and Planning grant for 2011-2012 has been approved. Over \$35,000 has been awarded to support the Healthcare & Science and Hospitality & Business Management Career Pathways. Funds from the grant will be used to provide pre-approved pathway specific equipment, supplies, materials and activities.**

**ACE BIKER!** Two wheels, two pedals and no motor. When you first meet Brian Smith, health and physical education teacher at TCCA/ACE for the past 15 years, you are struck his obvious energy, not only for his teaching role, but for all things health centered. His philosophy might best be captured with how



he describes his enthusiasm for bike riding: "If you're going to ride with me, there's little chit-chat. I'm focused on speed, time and distance." It is little wonder that Mr. Smith often bikes in charity events that require strength and endurance.

During the fall and spring, Brian can often be seen leading his students up Broadway to the Zuccolo Recreation Center, where ACE holds its physical education classes. During

the winter months, his efforts move to the classroom to cover health units dealing with such wide-ranging topics as general, over all fitness, nutrition, dating and domestic violence, and CPR. All students have the opportunity to earn a CPR certificate while taking health and the school covers the cost of securing the proper certificate.

"I try to keep current with the trends and issues that concern a student's health and well-being. Years ago we talked about the effects of smoking. Because of the widely distributed materials outlining the hazards of smoking, we can now spend more time on those issues which challenge our young people today. I'd have to say that some of the most important lessons we tackle are the lifelong effects of poor nutrition. Many of our students have relatives and friends who suffer from diabetes and other diseases associated with poor nutrition, including heart conditions. I'd like to say that as a result of our discussion, ACE students don't eat fast food—but that would be unrealistic. What I hope they take away from our discussions and the exercise of keeping a journal is that staying healthy is hard work, and being aware and paying attention to these issues as students can affect the long-term quality of their lives."

After graduation as an education major from the University of Rhode Island, Mr. Smith spent the first half of his career working with students in Rhode Island and Massachusetts in what he calls the area of "adapted physical education." As an instructor at the Groden Center in RI and a collaborative in Massachusetts, Mr. Smith worked with individuals with all kinds of disabilities to develop programs that would enhance mobility, address boredom and provide activities for those who could not undertake recreational activities unassisted. He has an endorsement in adapted physical education, and occasionally still is called upon to use these skills.

Alumni often ask for Mr. Smith. His genuine commitment to the well-being of ACE students is apparent every day, and it's clear that he is remembered and appreciated.

"I often see former students, and I'm pretty good at remembering names. The other day I was walking my dog, and I ran into a former student. It turns out she's now my neighbor." After all, this is Rhode Island!

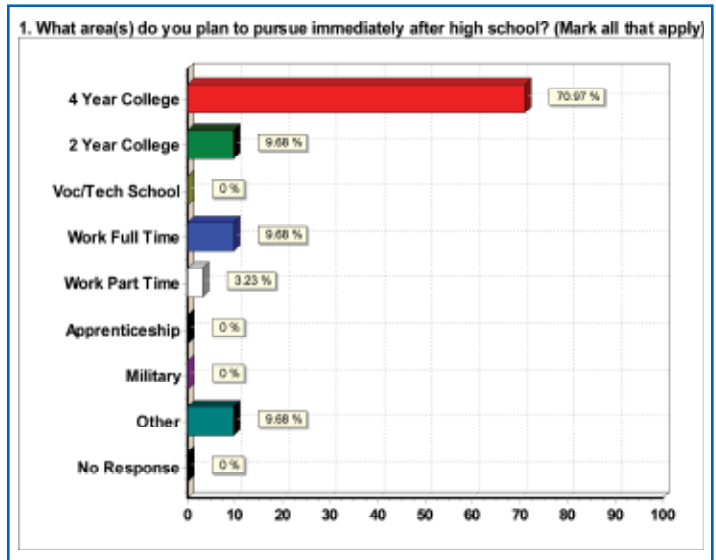
**LIFETRACKS** The April 2011 edition of Education Week carried the results of The Associated Press-Viacom Survey of Youth on Education, prepared by Stanford University.\* The provocative headline, “Young Adults Give Low Marks to High Schools,” prompted the staff at ACE to take a closer look at the survey results and compare them to results from surveys that the school has been conducting for both graduating seniors and alumni over the past several years. While the number of survey responses on the part of ACE students is low in comparison to the national data base, there are some interesting points for discussion based on this year’s results.

The key findings of The Associated Press-Viacom Survey suggested that **nationwide:**

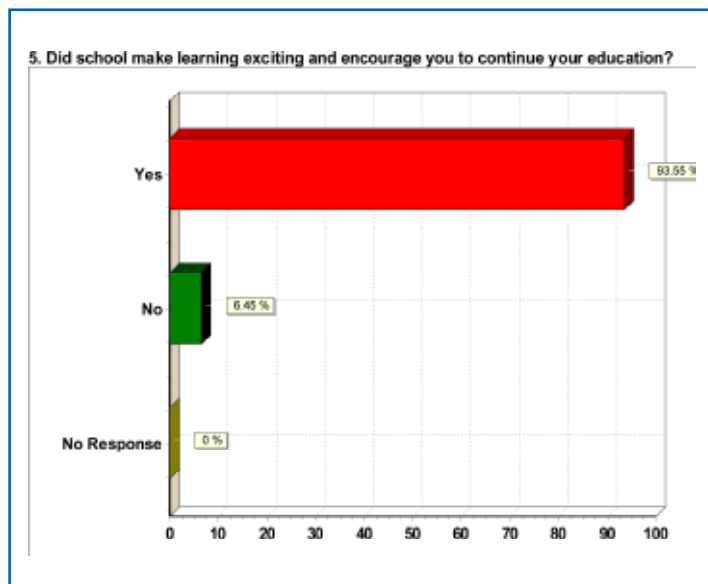
1. Most of the participants’ high schools did little to ease the way to college. Among the responses to these questions, students indicated that their high schools weren’t much help when it came to choosing a field of study, finding the right college or vocational school, or identifying sources of financial aid.
2. The majority of those surveyed received little exposure to the latest technology in chosen career fields, and few of the respondents received help in gaining work experience/skills.
3. Most respondents felt that they were prepared for high education and those who actually attended college or postsecondary formal training programs gave the most positive responses in this category.
4. Most survey respondents credited themselves and their ambitions and abilities with later success, followed closely by parents, family and friends. Nonwhite students were more likely to give credit for their successes to high school counselors and teachers.

**ACE’s Senior Exit Survey**, conducted by LifeTrack Services, Inc., completed by 31 of the Class of 2011’s 34 graduating seniors, reported the following:

- 71 percent indicated that they intended to pursue a four-year college degree immediately after high school;
- 94 percent indicated that the school was helpful in selecting a path to follow after graduation;
- 94 percent indicated that the school made learning exciting and encouraged them to continue their education;
- 94 percent indicated that the school provided enough opportunities to explore career possibilities;
- 97 percent indicated that the school was helpful in selecting a path to follow after graduation;
- 97 percent indicated they would stay in touch with the school following graduation;
- 97 percent indicated they had a positive learning experience in high school;
- 97 percent reported that the school provided a good or excellent safe learning environment;
- 100 percent indicated that they know adults at the school that they could count on to help with problems;
- 81 percent indicated they received an excellent or good strong foundation in the use of technology;



- 91 percent reported that teachers held high standards and demanded quality work;
- 91 percent indicated that their teachers had a good or excellent command of the curriculum being taught;
- 96 percent said that student and parents were regularly notified concerning academic progress;
- 94 percent agreed that they were challenged to experience academic growth each year;
- 100 percent rated the school overall as providing a good or excellent learning environment.



ACE remains committed to maintaining a rigorous academic curriculum, while offering significant opportunities to develop life and employments skills that lead to postsecondary education and training opportunities, and a future of gainful employment and commitment to community. These annual surveys provided opportunities for administration, faculty, staff, parents and students to discuss how ACE students feel about the job we’re doing in meeting these goals.

\*The survey was conducted by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications from February 18, 2011, through March 6, 2011. The results were based on phone interviews, in both English and Spanish, with a nationally representative random sample of 1,104 adults, ages 18-24.

## THE HALLS ARE ALIVE WITH THE SOUND OF...MEDICAL EQUIPMENT???



Elizabeth Rivera and Jamal Kpoto.

The program is a centerpiece of ACE's Healthcare & Science Career Pathway, focused on providing students finishing their junior year in the career pathway with an opportunity to earn a professional credential while still in high school that will assist students in funding or getting a jump-start on their postsecondary plans. At the June 2011 graduation, six students received a CNA license together with their diplomas.

The majority of the summer program took place at ACE, with faculty from CCRI as instructors, and support provided by ACE teacher, Nicolette Ciano, who served as co-coordinator and Stepping Up staff member Elkinsette Clinton, who served as co-coordinator and youth advisor. Students had to meet rigorous criteria for admission to the program, and were provided with all materials, including shoes, uniforms, texts, a CPR course and fees required to register for the state licensing test. Students spent class time at the CCRI Lincoln Campus Nursing Laboratory learning their clinical skills, and at Steere House, a long-term care facility on Rhode Island Hospital's campus, putting their classroom training into practical work settings. Coupled with the compressed time frame for the course, students faced rigorous tests every week. In order to continue in the program,



Students put their clinical skills to practical use at Steere House.

Stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs and lab coats were all part of the hallway scene at ACE this summer. Fifteen young men and women, 12 from TCCA/ACE, took part in a summer program to earn Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credentials over an eight week course. The program, funded by a grant from Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, was made possible by a collaborative that included the school, Women & Infants Hospital, the Community College of Rhode Island's (CCRI), and the Stepping Up Program.

students had to achieve a high benchmark on each test. Eight of the original 12 ACE students successfully completed the course, together with two students from Mt. Pleasant High, one student from the Met School and one student from Cooley Health and Science Technology High School (now Juanita Sanchez High School) who also participated in the program.

At a recent round table gathering of some of ACE's students who successfully completed the program, it was clear that these students had a life-changing experience. Each in turn voiced his or her aspirations: "I want to be a pharmacist...physical therapist...oncologist...surgeon..." Many voiced the practical benefits: "Quite honestly it improves my resume for college and for a job." As a requirement of participating in the course, students could not hold down a summer job while in the class.

Would they recommend it to their fellow juniors? "Sure, if they were interested."

Would they have any advice? "Yes, you'll already be behind on the first day! But you CAN do it. You just need to rely on your determination and commitment—and on the support provided by the coordinators."

All of those who successfully completed the course are scheduled to take the state licensing exam in October. The examination will include two hours of written questions and 25 minutes of clinical testing where each of the students will be asked to perform five of the 24 skills taught in the class. They are preparing by attending afterschool review sessions two days a week offered by Ms. Ciano and Ms. Clinton.

Ms. Nicolette Ciano, ACE Healthcare & Science Pathway Coordinator added, "This is an extraordinary opportunity for ACE students to earn a credential that will assist them in funding their future career plans while addressing the gap in qualified healthcare professionals available to serve Rhode Island's needs in the healthcare industry. We look forward to the opportunity to continue to offer this program next summer."

All members of ACE's senior class must perform an internship project which includes research and writing preparation in the fall, and placement and a final presentation in the spring as a graduation requirement. These CNA students know just what internship field they want to pursue, and hope that their chances for placement will be enhanced by their newly acquired skills and license.

ACE students who successfully completed the course include: Orlando Correia, Michelle Ea, Catherine Garcia, Joelisa Khun, Jamal Kpoto, Yajaira Lopez, Mariah Moore and Elizabeth Rivera.

*"The CNA program was very demanding, but it prepared me for the challenges of senior year and helped me to gain more independence with my school work."* Elizabeth Rivera'12

*"The CNA program is the best opportunity ever and leads me one step closer to my career goals."* Orlando Correia'12

*"The CNA summer program was a challenge, but a good experience. It gave us a glimpse of college and the work ahead."* Jamal Kpoto'12.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### JAMIE RAMIREZ '09



The beautiful young woman who sat across the desk was introduced as “a wild woman.” Jamie Ramirez '09, confident, self-assured and focused was the first to say that the wild woman description was mild. “I did okay in grades, but my attitude and behavior as a high school student were just terrible. I had a terrible ‘mouth’ and was always in trouble and being written up.”

Jamie, the youngest in her family, was the first to earn a high school degree. Born in New York City, she had only been in Rhode Island a few years when she enrolled in Textron Chamber Academy. “I thought I was going to be a hair dresser—in fact, that’s the field I chose for my senior internship. Then I thought I might be a business manager and own my own hair salon. When I started CCRI I took management courses.”

Jamie actually enrolled at CCRI in the general studies program, but has decided that she wants to pursue a degree in psychology, a dream she plans to follow next fall with a transfer to Lehman College in New York City, “back home,” as she said.

So what happened on the road to growing up? What transformed a self-described “pain” into a student with a plan that certainly requires a graduate degree?

“My sister.” Jamie’s sister Katherine 24 has some very special needs. “She only has the skills and learning level of about a six year old. Right now, she’s enrolled in a program to learn how to take care of herself, but I seem to know what she’s thinking. I help her and protect her—and she’s the reason I want to pursue psychology—to help others like Katherine. I thought about being a speech therapist, but I thought I could help more people like my sister if I pursued psychology and the counseling field.”

So, what advice would Jamie give to a student who behaved as she did during her early high school days? “Don’t let your friends interfere with your education. They will not be there later in life. You must be independent and realize that you must rely on yourself to become successful.”

When Jamie was asked if she would have given up on a student who behaved as she did, she was quick to say, “NO!” ‘Chambers’ as Jamie calls her high school did not give up on me. I was prepared for college, and I have a life plan.”

Was there anyone in particular at the school whom she credits with sticking by her? “Yes, the person I gave the hardest time—my Portuguese teacher, Miss Ferreira. I gave her a **very** hard time, and she stayed with me. I am very grateful.”

And we, Jamie, are very proud!

## WE NEED YOU ON THE ACE TEAM!

**As you opened this newsletter, a small envelope probably dropped on the floor or in your lap. It represents an important way you can ensure that the Academy for Career Exploration continues to provide a rigorous academic and career focused option for Providence’s high school students.**

**The 2011-2012 ACE Annual Appeal asks each of you to consider making a contribution to support a number of key initiatives that are the priorities for our current school year. One of the reasons ACE graduates and places the majority of its students in postsecondary education, career ladder positions and advanced training programs is the school’s commitment to a holistic approach to each student. The social, emotional and academic support demonstrated by the new Freshman Academy has always been a central component of our plan for each student to succeed. Our Brother2Brother and Sister4Sister programs that will be beginning again in October have been models of support that extend and enhance the school day. Our required ninth grade Immersion Summer School ensures that our incoming students are prepared for the demands of high school course work. ACE also conducts a math and science camp for three weeks each summer for upperclassmen in preparation for state-wide standardized tests. We also offer after-school and Saturday tutoring programs to provide all ACE students with extra academic support.**

**We ask you to make a gift to ACE in support of our mission and goals. Each new gift and each increased gift over last year’s contribution will be matched dollar for dollar by Textron, Inc., part of the ongoing commitment of one of our founding partners to our continued growth.**

**We ask you to take advantage of this opportunity and make a gift to support ACE. ACE also accepts in-kind donations to support our programs, including equipment, school supplies and items that can be used to acknowledge the hard work of our students. We have already been notified that Caserta’s Pizza and Coca-Cola will be making product donations during the coming year.**

**All gifts will be acknowledged, are tax exempt to the extent allowed by law, and will be listed in the final newsletter of this academic year. A special reception for donors who give \$100 or more will be held in the spring.**

## CELEBRATING ACE'S NEW NAME



Upper left: Celebrate the Blue and Silver! Upper right: Vanessa Cooley, Statewide Career and Technical Education State Director, joins Jane Carr, ACE nurse, and Kristin Smilevski, ACE guidance counselor. Middle left: Bolivar Maldonado '13 models the new ACE uniform. Middle right: Cesar Morillo and Dinka Carreras, members of the Parent Association, join in the celebration. Lower left: Irina Abramov, English teacher, with students Michelle Ea '12 and Joelisa Kuhn '12. Lower right: Michael Shepard, Dean of Students, Rochelle Baker, Dean of Students, and Al Speaks, Employment Coordinator.

## POET, SHORT STORY WRITER, WORLD TRAVELER AND ACE TEACHER!

Her resume outlines the details; the person tells the real story. Meet Elizabeth (Beth) Kehew, new to the ACE faculty this year. Beth (almost a native Rhode Islander—she relocated at the age of five weeks) joins ACE as teacher of language arts and special education from her position last year as a Special Education Teacher at the Providence Career and Technical Academy.

Beth's office already looks like home. Decorated with bright red tassels and an eclectic collection of portraits of individuals from Socrates and Stevie Wonder, you know right away this is an unusual young woman. A graduate cum laude of Providence College and a Providence College Annual Poetry and Fiction award recipient, Beth left Rhode Island after her PC graduation to take a position as a middle school English teacher at the Northeast Hope International School, Tongliao, Inner Mongolia, China. As a member of the founding team of this international school, Beth designed and implemented English curriculum and taught classes in American Culture and Conversation. When asked what she took away from this extraordinary experience, Beth responded, "the humility of the people. They are truly humble and resist receiving individual praise. The young people and colleagues with whom I worked were focused solely on the achievement and well-being of the team. And, like many of us who have experienced very few other cultures, I was constantly aware of the sense of control that we all experienced. The school was surrounded by fences, and if we wanted to go into town, we needed to ask permission. It was rarely denied, but we were always aware that our freedom was restricted. While this was no doubt out of a concern for our safety, it also controlled what we could see and experience. We traveled extensively during non-school time, but it was always with the group and always with a translator. But, would I trade any part of that year? Never!"



Beth Kehew's class in Tongliao, Inner Mongolia, China.

China is not the only country in Beth's travelogue. As a Providence College student, she spent a semester at the University of Salamanca in Spain, perfecting her Spanish. As a member of Rotary International she was part of a select group of young professionals representing Rhode Island and Massachusetts, who traveled to Uruguay to participate in community service projects and make presentations to Uruguay Rotary Clubs about the cultural and vocational differences between the two countries.

Beth, who is bi-lingual, has also been an academic director and ESL instructor at the ELS Language Center at Roger Williams University and has been a Rhode Island Teaching Fellow, focused on raising student achievement in Rhode Island. She continues to volunteer at the South Providence Library, working with at-risk youth on homework and GED preparation.

Her other passions in life? "Sudden fiction." Writing short, short stories.

Beth is looking forward to sharing her experiences with her ACE students, both through her teaching and her passion for writing. "I am very hopeful that I can, by example, encourage my students to write creatively and discover the stories only they can share, based on their life experiences."

It's clear that being one of Beth's students will be one of those valuable life experiences.

## “EVERYTHING WE TRY TO DO HERE IS FOR YOU - TO SUPPORT YOUR AMBITIONS, YOUR DREAMS AND YOUR FUTURE.”

During the first all-school assembly of the new school year, CEO/ Head of School, Lawrence E. DeSalvatore, addressed an enthusiastic gathering of students, faculty and staff as they honored those students who during the 2010-2011 school year had achieved high honors or honors for all four quarters or high honors or honors for the 4th quarter. Also recognized were two students who had perfect attendance for the 2010-2011 school year.

“Everything is possible with an education. Today we honor those who made a great effort to further their education through perseverance and hard work.” As the names of those being honored were called, each student approached the podium and received a certificate of recognition and, in the case of those who earned honors for four quarters, a medallion featuring the new school colors and logo. As their classmates cheered their accomplishments, members of the new freshman class were inspired as they began their ACE journey.



Students honored included: **High Honors (All A's) for all Four Quarters of the 2010-2011 Academic Year:** Class of 2012, Catherine Garcia and Michelle Ea. **Honors (All A's and B's) for all Four Quarters of the 2010-2011 Academic Year:** Class of 2012, Tatiyanna Shields; Class of 2013, Baleria Franco, Genesis Monsanto and Henry Velasquez; Class of 2014, Krystal Fermin. **High Honors (All A's) for Quarter 4 of the 2010-2011 Academic Year:** Class of 2012, Michelle Ea, Catherine Garcia, Joelisa Khun and Orlando J. Rodriguez; Class of 2013, Jacqueline Ibarra; Class of 2014, Yecenia M. Baez, Amber Pettaway and Habib Touray. **Honors (All A's and B's) for Quarter 4 of the 2010-2011 Academic Year:** Class of 2012, Melissa Bolvito, Matee Gook-nuh, Suheidy Guzman, Jamal Kpoto, Elizabeth Rivera, Raikwon Rodrigues, Ashley Severino and Tatiyanna Shields; Class of 2013, Ayokunie Akinrimisi, Janiss Castillo, Claudia Cordova, Geraldine Dominguez, Dorcas Dougbe, Priscilla Gomez, Genesis Monsanto, Karen Monzon, Emline Mota, Stephanie Olivences, Karol Ramirez, Angela Serrano, and Kelmery Soto. Class of 2014, Estephany Avila, Krystal Fermin, Angel Guzman, Ravenn Hackney, Jurissa Jimenez, Alyssa Moore and Rebecca Vasquez. **Perfect Attendance for the 2010-2011 Academic Year:** Class of 2013, Jacquia Shields and Ayokunle Akinrimisi.

ACADEMY FOR CAREER EXPLORATION  
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