

For Immediate Release

Media Contact:
Stevan Allen
(916) 448-1336

41,000 & COUNTING: OPTIONS FOR YOUTH PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE DROPOUT PREVENTION MILESTONE

California's Largest Dropout Recovery Program Celebrates Past Decade with Revamped Web Site to Better Serve the Needs of State's At-Risk Students

PASADENA, Calif. (March 2, 2009) – California's largest dropout recovery program has successfully helped more than 41,000 students stay in school over the past decade, said officials with [Options for Youth](#) (OFY) Public Charter Schools.

Since 1999, the program has graduated or returned 41,423 middle and high school (7-12) students to a traditional school where they had another opportunity to complete their secondary education.

The schools have launched a new and improved web site (www.ofy.org) to coincide with today's announcement; the site is intended to make it easier for parents and students to understand the program and find learning centers near them. The home page includes a digital ticker that chronicles the number of students who graduate or return to a traditional public school.

"As the dropout crisis has grown, so has the need for our programs," said Tom Goodman, Superintendent for OFY. "In the past ten years, we have refined our approach and expanded our programs to more effectively help the state and local school districts tackle this problem."

With California's dropout rate estimated at more than 30 percent, Goodman acknowledged that significant challenges exist in reducing the dropout rate throughout the state. OFY has been highly successful in recovering its students, who, as a result, tend to perform better than their peers in similar schools.

OFY students reflect their communities, primarily in the Los Angeles and Sacramento regions. Students are typically low-income, Hispanic or other ethnic-minority. For many reasons, these students have fallen behind, not adapted to a traditional school, dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out of school and society.

Goodman attributed the schools' success to a number of key ingredients, including:

- Highly personalized one-on-one instruction with certified teachers;
- Single subject immersion; self-paced instruction;
- Field trips connecting students to their communities;
- High levels of performance accountability;
- A safe learning environment; the latest technology, and intervention tools;

- Flexible schedules; extended and convenient hours, including evenings and Saturdays at many learning centers.

Goodman said that the approach has been effective in meeting state requirements, which remains a priority of OFY. The schools have seen dramatic increases in scores on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). In addition to the CAHSEE scores, OFY compares favorably with similar schools in other California state rankings; and more than half of OFY students either graduate or return to a traditional high school.

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About Options for Youth: *OFY was founded in 1987 to provide quality educational services to thousands of at-risk students, primarily ethnic minority and low-income teenagers, pursuing academic recovery so that they can stay in school, continue their education, and earn high school diplomas. Changes in society, in the family unit and in the workplace have spurred the need for and growth of innovative instructional programs such as charter schools to meet the diverse educational needs and lifestyles of students, particularly in urban centers. For more information: www.ofy.org*