

For Immediate Release

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**Score Another One for Options for Youth and
Opportunities for Learning Charter Schools**

***Academic Performance Continues to Rise at
California's Largest Dropout Recovery Programs***

PASADENA, Calif. (Oct. 13, 2008) – California's two largest dropout recovery programs, which together serve an estimated 26,000 of the state's most at-risk teenage student population each year, today reported dramatic and continued improvement in key state benchmarks for academic performance, according to officials at Options for Youth (OFY) and Opportunities for Learning (OFL) charter schools.

Both programs are continuing to experience an upward trend in their scores on California's Academic Performance Index (API) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). All eight programs improved API scores; of those, most showed improvement in the English and math sections of the exit exam.

Tom Goodman, the superintendent for both OFY and OFL, commented on the reasons that the programs are experiencing so much success.

"By adding resources and new programs, we are continuing to improve our ability to meet and exceed state standards," he said. "The scores show how effectively we are recovering many students who would otherwise be dropping out of school."

Goodman noted that the statistics translate into changing the lives of thousands of teenagers – most of whom are low-income, ethnic minorities; they include former gang members, teen mothers or students who have simply fallen behind or do not fit in at a traditional high school.

"Behind all this data are real people who now have hopes and dreams for their futures," he said. "The human element to this effort is enormously gratifying to all of us."

API – California's API system rates schools on their academic achievement. An annual score is given to each school and ranges from 0-1000. The 2008 Growth API summarizes performance on a number of required standardized tests mandated by the California Department of Education. The following represent 2008 API scores for individual OFY and OFL schools and how they compared to 2006 scores:

- OFY – Burbank: 648, a four-point increase*
- OFY – San Gabriel: 639, a 20-point increase
- OFY – San Juan: 640, a one-point increase
- OFY – Upland: 602, a five-point increase
- OFY – Victor Valley: 636, a 22-point increase
- OFL – William S. Hart: 643, a nine-point increase
- OFL – Baldwin Park: 615, a four-point increase
- OFL – San Juan Capistrano: 718; a 90-point increase

CAHSEE – The state’s high school exit exam is an important indicator of student success in English Language Arts (ELA) and math; it is a prerequisite for earning a diploma. The following represent 2007-08 passage rates for each subject, as well as the percentage improvement for the previous year:

- OFY – Burbank: 85% ELA, six-point increase; 58% math, three-point gain
- OFY – San Gabriel: 80% ELA, two-point decrease; 57% math, seven-point gain
- OFY – Upland: 73% ELA, four point decrease; 55% math, one-point decrease
- OFY – Victor Valley: 81% ELA, eight-point increase; 68% math, nine-point gain
- OFY – San Juan: 79% ELA, six-point decrease; 70% math, eight-point increase
- OFL – William S. Hart: 82% ELA, six-point increase; 56% math, four-point gain
- OFL – Baldwin Park: 73% ELA, 10-point increase; 60% math, 15-point gain
- OFL –San Juan Capistrano: 89% ELA, 20-point gain; 74% math, 12-point gain

Both OFY and OFL have boosted resources in recent years for professional development for teachers, curriculum, Saturday schools, technology, field trips, assessment and other programs.

“For more than 20 years, we have continued to improve and adapt our programs to meet the needs of at-risk students,” said Goodman. “Our test results underscore this commitment to do whatever it takes to reach this underserved population.”

* Based on internally calculated API Base score

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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

About Opportunities for Learning Charter Schools: OFL is the operating name of three independent, WASC accredited charter schools with 26 learning centers located throughout Southern California. OFL and its sister organization, Options for Youth Charter Schools, currently serve more than 26,000 students each year; thousands more are on waiting lists. Established by lifelong teachers and educators, John and Joan Hall in 1999, OFL began serving at-risk students who dropped out or were at risk of dropping out of school. Over time, it has expanded its focus to become an innovator in the development of educational options, curriculum, programs and administrative services tailored to the needs of independent study and designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students. For more information: www.emsofl.com