

Delivering the Dream 2007

Picture a stream of educators five people wide, extending down the hall of Detroit's Cobo Center, continuing beyond the line of sight. Minutes pass as they file into the dining room, smiling, networking, comparing notes. Five minutes pass, and there's no end in sight. Ten minutes go by, and they're still coming, with a steady hum of anticipation. Fifteen minutes later, and the last of 3,000 participants are finally approaching the door. Does anyone still question whether Michigan's charter public schools movement is a powerful force?

Inspired by more than 100 speakers and session leaders, attendees at the 10th annual Michigan Charter Schools Conference are back in their schools today, implementing ideas and strategies with renewed enthusiasm. We at MAPSA extend another warm "thank you" to all who helped make this event a success, including our sponsors.

Congratulations to the following 2007 award winners:

- **Teacher of the Year:**

- **Amy Straus**

- 5th grade, Central Academy in Ann Arbor



- **Administrator of the Year:**

- **Nawal Hamadeh**

- founder & leader, Star International and Universal Learning academies in Dearborn Heights, and Universal Academy in Detroit



- **School of Excellence: Oakland Academy** in Portage



Dearborn Heights Educator Wins Administrator of the Year Award

For More Information, Contact
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EMBARGOED until 1:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2, 2007

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- **Detroit, Taylor, Oak Park leaders are finalists**

DETROIT -- Nawal Hamadeh, an educator leading three Dearborn Heights/Detroit schools that fill a crucial gap for low-income, often Arab American students, will be recognized Nov. 2 as Michigan's Charter School Administrator of the Year.

The schools she founded serve 2,000 K-12 students. A native of Lebanon, Hamadeh serves not only as lead educator, but as a role model to children dealing with economic and cultural challenges.

"Mrs. Hamadeh talks with students about her own story -- about starting with nothing," said Angel Ouza, a 2004 graduate of Star International Academy in Dearborn Heights. "She works to inspire students all the time, asking if their education is going well and talking about how important college is."

Ouza, a University of Michigan alumna, has been a substitute teacher at Star and hopes to return as a social worker after completing her master's degree. Ouza admires Hamadeh for her gentle influence, including through personally funded college scholarships.

Hamadeh will be recognized during Friday's 10th annual Michigan Charter Schools Conference, which will draw 3,000 educators to Detroit's Cobo Center. The award will be presented during lunch, between 1 and 1:30 p.m. **Hamadeh will not know of the award beforehand.**

Besides Star International, Hamadeh leads Universal Academy in Detroit and Universal Learning Academy in Dearborn Heights. The three schools:

- Immerse students in Arabic and English languages. They learn reading, writing, comprehension and grammar in both. Further, Arabic is taught at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.
- Promote the study of Arabic and American cultures.
- Have diverse staff members who share their cultures and give children a global view.
- Follow the Michigan Framework with a curriculum fully aligned to state standards.
- Meet national and international standards including adopting and introducing the International Baccalaureate Standards this fall at the middle and high school level.

Earlier this year, the schools received a federal grant worth nearly \$1 million over three years to expand their Arabic programs. Only three such grants were given across the country, part of a national push to increase the number of students studying languages deemed critical to America's competitiveness.

"Nawal Hamadeh is a true, 21st century educator, implementing education in ways that position all children for success as adults," said Dan Quisenberry, president of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA). "She builds bridges, connecting students, educators, parents and communities. She is a role model with remarkable lessons to teach all of us in education, no matter who our students are or where our schools are located."

Erik Garr, a Detroit native who's now a partner with Chicago's Diamond Management & Technology Consultants, worked with Hamadeh recently on developing a strategic business plan.

"I was impressed with how well run the schools are, plus they're filling a profound need," Garr said. "When you do business planning, you look at market research, and it's clear -- we need Nawal Hamadeh and her schools. They're meeting a need other schools are just not addressing, and it would take too long to get them to change. ... Imagine trying to learn English in a traditional school. We'd lose a lot of these kids. Nawal's not losing them."

Star and Universal are "beating the odds," with more than half of their students qualifying for subsidized lunch while at least 60% are proficient in both math and English language arts. Further, Universal was recognized in May through the Skillman Foundation's Good Schools program in Detroit.

Leila Hamade, director of compliance for the schools, said Nawal Hamadeh keeps the focus on students and

continuously finds new tools and methods for staff to use in helping students. Students know her, and parents trust her. Importantly, Nawal makes extensive use of data in educational and staffing decisions, a push that permeates each school.

In describing her reason for starting the schools, Nawal quietly exudes a passion for children, families and communities. She talks of strengthening an often-elusive connection between disparate cultures.

"We promote peace, not wars," Hamadeh said when the foreign language grant was announced. "The more we understand each other, and our cultures, the less conflict there is. We bring people together, sharing in the process of learning, sharing meals, sharing lives. It's a good model for a global world."

The four other 2007 Administrator of the Year finalists are:

Nan Gill, University Preparatory Academy in Detroit. UPA founder Doug Ross calls Gill a rare leader with the ability to think big picture, implement plans and relate well with others. She was a primary creator of U-Prep when it opened in 2000 as a middle school. When the elementary was added, she designed the building, curriculum, educational goals and environment, then led the way in making it happen. This summer, she was promoted to chief instructional officer, overseeing five principals and responsible for graduating students who can compete with peers from the state's best schools.

Rashid Fai'Sal, Academy of Oak Park Marlow. Fai'Sal knows students personally, taking time to challenge each to greater achievement. He monitors classes, talks with parents, and encourages students. Sometimes it's by talking about great colleges, and sometimes it's by giving a youngster a book about Jackie Robinson. He's developed teams among staff and meets with them regularly to plan improvements to the school's programs. He seeks opportunities to showcase excellence, such as the NAACP writing contest, which last year brought a first and third-place award to academy students.

Frank Nardelli, Dove Academy in Detroit. Nardelli is a loving leader who expects and receives the utmost from staff, students and parents. That's essential in a school located in a high-crime area, serving an at-risk population often struggling with family issues. Under his leadership, the school secured accreditation through the North Central Association, beat the local district on the MEAP, and this spring was named one of six high-performing Detroit elementaries by the Skillman Foundation. Nardelli started as a first-year teacher at Dove when it opened 10 years ago, was promoted to assistant principal, and took the helm in 2004.

Angela Romanowski, Trillium Academy in Taylor. Romanowski is a finalist for the second year in a row, leading a school that continues to make gains in MEAP scores while combining a focus on Montessori methods and the arts. Romanowski has nurtured a strongly cohesive team of teachers who are expert in individualized learning. Under her leadership, the school has expanded to include high school and is adding a wing with more classrooms, a second gym, another specials room for art, music, drama and Spanish, and a tech lab. This fall, Trillium's enrollment grew 25%, to 612 students.