



Schools Of Opportunity Project Honors 20 Exemplary High Schools From Coast To Coast

Key Takeaway: Excellent high schools are actively striving to close opportunity gaps.

Find Documents:

Press Release: <http://nepc.info/node/8221>

Website Describing Recognized Schools: <http://opportunitygap.org/>

Contact:

Kevin Welner: (303) 492-8370, kevin.welner@colorado.edu

Carol Burris: (516) 993-2141, burriscarol@gmail.com

BOULDER, CO (September 12, 2016) – From an innovative rural school in Vermont to a school serving international refugees in California, 20 inspiring schools are being acknowledged as 2016 “Schools of Opportunity.”

Based at the University of Colorado Boulder, the National Education Policy Center (NEPC) sponsors the annual Schools of Opportunity project, which identifies and recognizes excellent public high schools that actively strive to close opportunity gaps – the differences in opportunities and resources that drive the well-known achievement gaps.

“Children learn when they have opportunities to learn,” said NEPC Director and CU Boulder Professor Kevin Welner, co-director for the project. “When those opportunities are denied, they fall behind.”

Following last year’s pilot of the project in just Colorado and New York, this year’s recognitions considered high schools from coast to coast.

“The project offers an alternative way of assessing school quality – one that rejects the idea that test scores identify the nation’s best schools,” said Carol Burris, co-director of the project. “Schools of Opportunity use research-based practices to support all students and their teachers, thereby creating engaged and successful learning environments.”

In addition to Burris and Welner, the effort was led by Linda Molner Kelley, Michelle Renée Valladares and Rhianna Kirk. The review team – comprised of 40 researchers, teachers,

policymakers and administrators – based the “gold” and “silver” recognitions on specific principles identified in the book, *Closing the Opportunity Gap*, which was co-edited by Welner.

Applications went through four levels of screening, including rubric-based ratings and in-person evaluator visits to the recognized “gold” schools. Evaluators looked at school practices that fell into categories such as *create and maintain healthy school culture; broaden and enrich school curriculum; use a variety of assessments designed to respond to student needs; and support teachers as professionals.*

The eight Gold Schools of Opportunity in 2016 are:

- Crater Renaissance Academy, Central Point, Oregon
- Hillsdale High School, San Mateo, California
- Leland and Gray Union Middle and High School, Townshend, Vermont
- Rainier Beach High School, Seattle, Washington
- Revere High School, Revere, Massachusetts
- Rochester International Academy, Rochester, New York
- South Side High School, Rockville Centre, New York
- William Smith High School, Aurora, Colorado

The 12 high schools that earned a Silver Schools of Opportunity designation in 2016 are:

- Boston Arts Academy, Boston, Massachusetts
- Cedar Shoals High School, Athens, Georgia
- Clarke Central High School, Athens, Georgia
- East Rockaway High School, East Rockaway, New York
- New Vista High, Boulder, Colorado
- Northwest High School, Germantown, Maryland
- Oakland International High, Oakland, California
- Ossining High School, Ossining, New York
- Quilcene High School, Quilcene, Washington
- Stillman Valley High School, Stillman Valley, Illinois
- Urbana High School, Urbana, Illinois
- Washington Technology Magnet School, St. Paul, Minnesota

To learn more about the schools, including descriptions for each, and the project, visit opportunitygap.org.

The call for nominations for the 2017 Schools of Opportunity recognitions will launch in November 2016 and evaluations will take place in the spring. Nomination material will be available at opportunitygap.org.

The Schools of Opportunity project is supported by the Ford Foundation and the National Education Association Foundation.

The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, produces and disseminates high-quality, peer-reviewed research to inform education policy discussions. Visit us at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu>