

## **Washington DC Charter Schools Are Given a Boost by Education Philanthropist, Jeffrey Epstein**

The Jeffrey Epstein Foundation has just contributed substantial financial support to the Maya Angelou Charter Schools located in the inner city of Washington DC.

The funding comes at a time when public education in the nation's capital is still in crisis. According to the Office of State Superintendent of Education, 37% of public high school students read at 3rd grade level or below, 42% are considered proficient in elementary math, 43% in elementary reading, SAT scores are 200 points below the national average and 43% of all public school students are overweight or obese. As a result, privately funded charter schools, have continued to grow and now serve 38% of public school students in DC.

Founded in 1997 by David Domenici and James Forman, Jr., the Maya Angelou Charter Schools are administered by the See Forever Foundation. The foundation started out as a program for teens in the juvenile justice system and later evolved into four successfully run schools, named after the National Book Award and Pulitzer author and poet, Maya Angelou. The schools include the Evans Middle School, Evans High School both in Ward 7 of the District, The Maya Angelou Academy, at the New Beginnings Youth Development Center (the long-term secure facility for D.C. youth who have been adjudicated delinquent), and The Maya Angelou Young Adult Learning Center that supports older students with a few high school credits.

Over the last school year, the Maya Angelou Schools have enrolled more than 600 students. The approach is pragmatic, focusing on essential skills such as reading and math, overcoming special learning needs, or reconnecting and inspiring students who are alienated for one reason or another. "Our goal is to help students reach their potential and prepare for college, career, and a lifetime of success," David Domenici remarked.

The results of the schools have been promising: 73% of graduates enroll in college as compared to 50% of local low- income high school graduates; 87% of alumni persist through the 1<sup>st</sup> year of college and 60% earn college degrees. In a national study by Mathematica Policy Research, the Evans High School was recognized with the EPIC Silver Gain Award for producing significant gains for students, one of only four schools nationally to earn this distinction.

The Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation which helped fund these schools, was established in 2000 to support science education throughout the United States but has evolved to support inner city and youth based education. "Charter schools, though generally well run, are not the ultimate solution," Jeffrey Epstein

commented. “But they can serve as powerful examples of how public schools should be run. Schools should be held to high public standards, but they need to have autonomy in order for them to be efficient. And with the ability to raise private funds, determine coursework, textbooks and teaching methods.”