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**New Department of Education Study Shows Early Successes in DC Opportunity Scholarship Program**

*Academic gains, parental satisfaction show need for Congress to continue program for low-income D.C. families*

**WASHINGTON** – Today, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the Department of Education released a report using the most rigorous research design showing academic gains and strong parental satisfaction in the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (DC OSP). The study – which covers only the first 19 months of students' participation – shows the need for Congress to act to continue the program, which is supported by D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty, other elected officials, community leaders, and a majority of D.C. residents.

Overall, students who were offered a scholarship scored higher on reading achievement tests than those not offered a scholarship. Also, test scores for three subgroups, which comprise nearly nine in 10 (88%) of participating students, show higher reading scores. These gains are equivalent to up to four months of additional schooling. These gains, on top of last year's study that showed improvements in math scores after just seven months, are signs that the DC OSP is having a positive impact on student achievement. An even more comprehensive study with new analysis is due out next June, 2009. It will include three years of academic impact data.

The IES study also shows strong parental satisfaction. This is similar to a Georgetown Focus Group study that showed overwhelming parental satisfaction and a strong desire on the part of parents and students to see the program continue.

"While these are early studies, it's hard to ignore the progress that's been made," said former D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, the Chairman of DC Children First. "On top of the previous studies, these new academic gains are a very promising sign," said Williams.

"I'm very encouraged by what I'm seeing. Clearly parents are happy and we're starting to see progress academically," said DC Children First Board Member Kevin P. Chavous, a former D.C. City Council Member. "This program is already a part of reforming all schools in D.C. for all of our kids, and I'm glad Mayor Fenty has thrown his support behind the program," Chavous said.

Mayor Fenty has worked to ensure that the package of federal investments to support D.C. schools continues, including \$18 million for D.C. public schools, \$18 million for D.C. public charter schools, \$18 million for the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, and a one-time infusion of \$20 million to support the public school reforms of Mayor Fenty and Chancellor Rhee. Congress is currently considering the budget request submitted by President Bush early this year.

"We need leaders who will support the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program," said Williams. "It's a critical piece of improving education in Washington, DC, and this new study underscores the need for Congress to act to continue the program."

The DC Opportunity Scholarship currently provides scholarships to more than 1,900 low-income

District students. They come from families with an average income of approximately \$22,000 a year, and have standardized reading and math test scores below the 33<sup>rd</sup> percentile. Without the scholarship, 86% of the students participating in the program would otherwise have been assigned to attend a D.C. Public School in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

DC Children First is a coalition of families, educators, business and community leaders dedicated to education reform in Washington, DC. DC Children First strongly supports the continuation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, as a part of an ambitious school reform agenda that includes continuing the three-part federal investments in this program as well as federal dollars for D.C. public and public charter schools.

For more information, please visit our Web site: [www.dcchildrenfirst.org](http://www.dcchildrenfirst.org)

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