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## **Esperanza Academy's Class of 2008 Graduates**

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June 9, 2008, Philadelphia, PA –Esperanza Academy Charter High School's class of 2008 celebrated its Commencement Ceremony on Friday, June 6 at the Irvine Auditorium in the University of Pennsylvania. The keynote speaker for the graduation was Governor Tom Ridge –Former Governor of Pennsylvania and Former Secretary of Homeland Security. Also present were the Rev. Danny Cortés, Chairperson of the Academy's Board of Directors and the Rev. Luis Cortés, Jr., President of Esperanza and founder of the high school.

The graduation rate for Esperanza Academy's Class of 2008 is 77%, the highest ever recorded at the school since it opened its doors nine years ago. The 144 graduates completed the 27 necessary credits required to graduate, considerably more than the 23.5 credits required by both district and state public schools. In addition, 94% of the students have been accepted into colleges in the United States and abroad. "These rates are extraordinary," said David Rossi, Executive Director of Esperanza Academy. "We are very proud of our students and of all their accomplishments."

The class Valedictorian was accepted to the University of Pennsylvania with a full scholarship. She is the first Esperanza Academy graduate to attend an Ivy League school. Some of the colleges/universities that the students will be attending are Arcadia University, Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, Art Institute of Philadelphia, Delaware State University, Drexel University, Eastern University, Esperanza College of Eastern University, Indiana University, LaSalle University, Penn State, Temple University, Universidad Central de Este –Dominican Republic, Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, University of Delaware, University of New Haven, University of Pittsburg, University of Tampa, and Villanova University, among many others.

Esperanza Academy met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards for No Child Left Behind –one of only three neighborhood high schools in the city to achieve AYP status for two consecutive years. "We opened the school to offering a better education and a better future for our children of the Latino *barrio* of North Philadelphia, and this graduation shows the fruits of our labor," said the Rev. Luis Cortés, Jr.

Esperanza Academy Charter High School opened its doors in 2000 to provide quality education that prepares critically thinking, socially capable, spiritually sensitive, and culturally aware young adults who can use English, Spanish, and technology as tools for success. With zero tolerance for fighting, vandalism, drug, alcohol and weapons possession, the Academy is quickly becoming a model for Philadelphia schools. For more information, please call Esperanza Academy Charter High School at 215-457-3667.

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