

After-School Program for Higher Education

*Charles N. Fortes Magnet Academy
Providence, Rhode Island*

Third-grade students at Charles N. Fortes Magnet Academy who fulfill a pledge to stay in school and maintain a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle may find a full college scholarship waiting when they graduate from high school. All participating students receive guidance in reading, writing, and math, with a few getting a free ride at the college of their choice.

The scholarship program comes from a partnership between the school and the Rhode Island Children's Crusade for Higher Education, a non-profit government agency. The Children's Crusade recruits students in the third grade and asks them to make a pledge to stay in school and avoid drugs and alcohol. In their senior year of high school, students who have fulfilled the pledge can apply for the scholarships. The number available depends on the amount of money raised.

Rather than simply dangle the carrot of a college scholarship, the Children's Crusade works to help all of the students along the way. The school and the Children's Crusade enlist the help of AmeriCorps volunteers and professionals from the community to mentor students. They also bring in artists to work with students on multidisciplinary projects.

The school raises funds for the scholarship program, which are then matched by the Children's Crusade. This year, their combined efforts raised \$38,000. The school lets parents know about the student pledge and the scholarship program through the school newsletter; the Children's Crusade shares program information

at its monthly assemblies, which also include motivational speakers to encourage students and their families.

Nearly 200 students in grades 3-6 at Charles N. Fortes Magnet Academy have taken the pledge and are benefiting from the assistance the Children's Crusade provides. While only a few will eventually win the Children's Crusade scholarships, many will go on to top colleges and win other scholarships and awards, in part because of the program's academic, behavioral, and motivational guidance. The school hopes to make even more scholarships available in the future by raising awareness of the program and additional funds.

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