

Date: April 24, 2007

For Immediate Release

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## **School Performance Coaching Program in Tennessee Gets Harvard “Innovations” Award** Tennessee-Edvantia Partnership Spurs Improvement Among Low-Performing Schools

CHARLESTON, WV—The Tennessee Exemplary Educators Program, developed through a partnership between the Tennessee Department of Education and a nonprofit corporation (Edvantia), has received a Top 50 Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard University (<http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/spotlight.html?id=291&preview=0>).

Through the Tennessee program, experienced educators, called Exemplary Educators, or EEs, receive specialized training and supervision from Edvantia as they work to build school and district capacity in core areas associated with improved performance and student achievement. Initiated in 2001, the EE program has been the mainstay of Tennessee’s statewide system of support under the No Child Left Behind Act. Approximately 90% of the schools that were not achieving adequate yearly progress have been able to do so with the assistance of an EE.

The Tennessee EE program was one of 50 selected for a 2007 “Innovations” award from a pool of nearly 1,000 applicants from across the nation, representing all levels of government and a variety of policy areas. “These programs . . . have capitalized on creative thinking to increase the effectiveness of government,” says Stephen Goldsmith, Director of the Innovations in American Government program.

“I’m proud to see this award go to the Tennessee Department of Education, and to be a part of this exciting work,” says Edvantia’s Dr. Steven Moats, who directs the EE program. “From the beginning, the Department has been committed to building a statewide program of support that’s research based and results-oriented. Our collaboration at the state level, combined with the hard work of many Tennessee school and district educators, is increasing the academic success of hundreds of students in rural and urban schools, across all grade levels.”

To make sure that results can be sustained over time, the EE program uses a mentoring/coaching model that builds a school’s capacity to “do it themselves.” For example, EEs train school staff to use school performance data to make decisions about instruction and assessment. The focus on professional growth and structural support for improvements creates self-reliance, not dependency on outside help. In other words, the EE is always working toward a point when he or she won’t be needed anymore.



“An in-house specialist dedicated to guiding change has been proven a highly valuable resource for schools,” says Dr. Connie Smith, Director of Accountability for the Tennessee Department of Education. “It has allowed educators to individualize improvement strategies to have the greatest impact on classroom learning.”

Since 2001, more than 150 EEs have received intensive training designed and delivered by Edvantia. They have assisted approximately 300 high priority schools and 26 high priority districts. An independent unit of Edvantia conducts research and evaluates the effectiveness of the EE program. Findings are used to improve program effectiveness.

For a description of the Tennessee Exemplary Educators Program, its results, and the research behind it, visit the Edvantia Web site at [www.edvantia.org](http://www.edvantia.org). Also on the Edvantia Web site, at <http://www.edvantia.org/corporate/index1.cfm?&section=about&area=tnee>, are links to the Tennessee Electronic Network for Improving Schools (TENIS), to Edvantia’s evidence-based school improvement coaching standards, and to information on School Performance Coaching institutes that are now available for schools and districts nationwide.

**About the Innovations in Government Award:** The Innovations in American Government Award is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. A description of the Top 50 programs for 2007, as well as contact information for each, is available at <http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu/Ash/2007Top50ListOfPrograms.pdf>

**About Edvantia:** Edvantia is a nonprofit education research and development corporation, founded in 1966, that partners with practitioners, education agencies, publishers, and service providers to improve learning and advance student success. Edvantia provides clients with a range of services, including research, evaluation, professional development, and consulting.

