

# RITE NOW @ ROP



Five years ago Rite of Passage and the Not-for-Profit School Board of Southwest Leadership Academy took on the challenge of rescuing a Phoenix charter school that was struggling to meet both academic and financial standards of the State of Arizona. Now after five years, principal Dr. Gregory Fowler, assistant principal, Jessica Vensel and a very committed staff of teachers, counselors and behavior mentors were notified by the Arizona Department of Education that the school's state rating has changed from a "D" to a "B" school. As Dr. Fowler says, "on our way to an "A"!

This has not been an easy task. Teachers took on new programs with support of the administration including a new standards-based curriculum, Beyond Textbooks, a new assessment tool, Galileo, greater accountability measures, a new reading program, Reading 180, and increased communication with parents including home visits by the teachers. It all paid off when the State issued their grading for SLA and both the staff and students celebrated their mutual success.

Ratings in Arizona are based on several clearly identified criteria including student academic performance, student academic growth, academic persistence, the graduation rate, the dropout rate, college and career readiness activities and programs, English language proficiency and other tangible and measurable requirements. The ratings are a picture of the growth and achievement of the schools with heavy emphasis on the statewide assessment exam in Language Arts, Mathematics and Science.

How does it feel to have jumped head so much over the past year? According to Dr. Philip Geiger, superintendent, "The follow up and follow by everyone throughout the school has made a big difference and our students are emulating what they see".