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By Benjamin Woodard on October 1, 2013 6:42am

DGEWATER — Senn High School and the Chicago Math and Science Academy, a charter school, each received the Chicago Public Schools' highest academic rating last week, joining the ranks of Lane Tech College Prep and Lincoln Park High School.

"It's a really, really big deal," said Senn Principal Susan Lofton, who joined the school in 2010 when it was ranked the worst high school in the city. "Sadly, and I can say this, no matter how bad a day you had, you never were going to be as bad as Senn."

But Senn has steadily improved its standing with CPS, which is calculated using a variety of factors, including attendance and test scores.

Now the school's performance score is tied with Lincoln Park's.

The Chicago Math and Science Academy, a charter school in Rogers Park, also was elevated to Level 1 (excellent), up from Level 2 (good).

Math & Science Principal Aydin Kara said his students who achieved high ACT scores last year helped boost the school's ranking.

"Our students worked really hard to improve their skills in order to achieve high ACT scores," he said. "Our goal has always been to prepare students for college, and raising ACT scores is a crucial step in this process."

Earlier in the summer, the school projected a 92 percent graduation rate, which is 29 percent higher than the CPS average.

At Senn, Lofton bills the community's support as a key factor in the school's improvement, and more students from the neighborhood have enrolled at the school.

Beating projections, Senn signed up 140 more students this year compared to last.

"We're growing," she said.