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## A chartered triumph



Michael Connor/The Washington Times

**Bright future:** Lawrence Chambers is one of 18 seniors in the first graduating class at the Thurgood Marshall Academy.

### Charter school students head to college as peers drop out, fall behind

By Amy Doolittle  
and Keyonna Summers  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Lawrence Chambers grinned yesterday like a young man who has accomplished the impossible. Through hard work and determination, the young Southeast resident was part of the first graduating class at Thurgood Marshall Academy Public

Charter High School and became the first among his neighborhood friends to get accepted to college.

"If it keeps you off the street, it's good," said Lawrence, 18. "That's what Thurgood Marshall Academy did for me. A lot of my friends dropped out of school or had kids. But I realized my potential."

He was among 18 seniors yes-

terday who had been more likely to quit school than graduate. Lawrence was also part of the 80-student freshman class from Ward 8 public schools and the impoverished Anacostia and Congress Heights neighborhoods that had only fifth- or sixth-grade reading skills. At the end of the first year, 41 students were kept behind because they did not meet the 10th-grade

requirements.

"It was a very difficult decision to hold back over half of the class, but we couldn't honestly say that they were ready for the 10th grade," school co-founder Joshua Kern said yesterday at graduation ceremonies at Howard University's Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel.

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