

**STATEMENT OF YES PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ON DISTRICT-CHARTER PARTNERSHIPS
APRIL 4, 2018**

Good Morning. My name is Matthew Hansen and I am the Director of School Operations at YES Prep Public Schools. I want to thank the Chairman and Members of the Committee for allowing us to share our experiences partnering with local independent school districts and the beneficial impact these partnerships are having on our students. We launched our first school twenty years ago in 1998 and now operate 17 open enrollment middle and high schools in underserved communities throughout Houston, Texas.

YES Prep is home to over 12,000 students. Our student population is 96% black or Latino, with 87% of students being economically disadvantaged. At the same time, more than 71% of our alumni are enrolled in, or have graduated, from college. This is four times the national rate for low-income children of color.

We operate a total of four campuses within Aldine ISD and Spring Branch ISD - a middle school and a high school at each district. These unique settings offer students the best of a traditional school and the best of a charter school experiences.

WHY PARTNER?

YES Prep envisions that every child in Houston will have equitable access to a public school that delivers an excellent, college-ready education. To fulfill our vision and meet the needs of the over 18,000 families on waitlists for high quality charter school seats in Houston, we must form partnerships with neighboring districts in order to share and replicate best practices and thereby extend our impact throughout the Houston area. We firmly believe that we have more common ground than battleground in regards to seeking educational equity and excellence for all students.

PARTNERSHIP BACKGROUND

In 2011 Spring Branch ISD, KIPP Houston, and YES Prep Public Schools formed the SKY Partnership. The purpose of the SKY Partnership is to:

1. Start high-performing charter programs that will serve to catalyze organizational innovation and a higher-education going culture in SBISD.
2. Expand student and family choices utilizing the portfolio district concept within SBISD.

In 2012, Northbrook Middle School welcomed YES Prep and Landrum Middle School welcomed KIPP. In 2015, the partnership expanded with Northbrook High School welcoming YES Prep onto its campus. The Gates Foundation rewarded the partnership with the honor of being a Bill and Melinda Gates Compact City for District-Charter Collaboration. Together we are proving the idea that district-charter partnerships can and will enhance the performance of all students



In 2013, YES Prep formalized its partnership with Aldine ISD and was welcome by Hoffman Middle School and in 2016, by Eisenhower High School. Aldine ISD was also looking to increase options for families in their district and to leverage each partner's strengths and assets like, AISD's increased funding, robust facilities, technology, and extracurricular activities; and YES Prep's professional development programs and college-readiness approach, for maximum student impact,.

PARTERNSHIP OUTCOMES

The SKY Partnership is in its sixth year, and the trajectory for student and school improvement is strong.

- Both Landrum Middle School (LMS) and Northbrook Middle School (NMS) are no longer rated Improvement Required (IR) in the State Accountability System having attained a Met Standard Rating for three consecutive years.
- In 2017, Northbrook High School students outperformed state averages in English 1, Algebra 1, and Biology 1.

The Aldine partnership is in its fifth year and also shows strong academic outcomes.

- Analysis conducted by both Aldine and YES Prep shows that without the partnership, Hoffman MS would have been rated Improvement Required in 2017.
- In 2016, Eisenhower HS was rated Improvement Required and in 2017, after the first year of our partnership there, it was rated Met Standard AND earned two distinctions – one for academic achievement in mathematics and another for landing in the top 25% of similar schools* in the state for performance on student progress.

In our partnerships, all partners are also committed to measuring holistic data ranging from student engagement in extracurricular activities, to teacher collaboration and professional development, to shared collaboration to boost postsecondary success of our graduates. Partnership strength must also be measured in its endurance through changes in leadership over the duration of the partnerships, including new superintendents and school leaders.

LESSONS LEARNED

We are proud to see significant improvements in student outcomes and look forward to deepening our collaboration with Aldine and Spring Branch. As we strive to initiate new partnerships, we reflect on the many lessons we have learned over the last six years.

- 1) Philosophical and values alignment are key to a successful partnership. If all parties are not committed to student achievement and to learning from each other, a competition rather than true collaboration will ensue. When decisions are made with the best interest of students in mind and with a willingness to improve practice and policy, students will prosper even when leadership and staffing changes occur. By learning about each other's strengths and how we all wanted to grow, we were able to make compromises without sacrificing student outcomes.
- 2) Maximizing each partner's strengths and leveraging economies of scale results in organizational innovation. For example,
 - The partner district's budget allocation for technology allows every classroom to be equipped with a smart board. Grants from organizations like Verizon, and school-sponsored pilots are providing one-to-one students devices.
 - Access to the district's athletic and library facilities and to elective courses allows charter partners to offer more robust extracurricular and academic programming.
 - Sharing Special Education services ensures that needs are being assessed and addressed more efficiently.
 - A shared discipline system, including a more restorative approach, fosters a strong sense of community where expectations and consequences are consistent throughout the building.
- 3) Collaboration is an active sport that requires intentional training and daily practice. When school systems partner, operational alignment can make or break the success of a school day. For example, master schedule alignment improves every year and that facilitates day-to-day collaboration and minimizes disruption to instruction. This year, YES Prep aligned its school year calendar with partner districts as much as possible to streamline transportation, school food, and instructional days.

Additionally, SKY Partners collaborate by sharing campus professional development strategies; YES Prep Teaching Excellence Program trains KIPP and SBISDs novice teachers; SBISD designed Leadership Programming inspired by KIPP School Leadership Programming, and school staff have shared understanding of curriculum and grading practices.



- 4) Leaders at all levels need to be invested and have ample time to prepare for the philosophical and day-to-day changes. We spent a lot of time investing all of the system leaders and getting on the same page that we did not give our school leaders and staff enough time to digest all of the changes and prepare for them. We learned from that and can now strategize and execute much more efficiently than before.

CLOSING

YES Prep's partnerships transcend co-location and are truly collaborative. We don't simply share space, our students play sports and participate in other extracurricular activities together, we set strategy and make decisions together, and at Spring Branch, we even train our teachers together. Instead of transactional relationships, we have partnerships.

We learn from just as much as we teach to our district partners. Districts demonstrate why efficient systems are necessary to scale up. At YES, we now ask ourselves, how can we innovate our model to serve at the district level while maintaining values and student/family centeredness?

As YES Prep continues to expand to meet the demand for high quality public schools, we hope to open at least one new partnership school by 2020. We hope that favorable policies and laws are in place to encourage district-charter partnerships and welcome members of the Committee to visit one of our partnership campuses in Houston.

Thank you again for focusing on these important issues and allowing YES Prep to share our partnership experience with you.

NOTES

* It's Top 25% of campus comparative groups (cohort of 40 schools similar in demographics/size/etc). A little different than top 25% of schools in Texas.