

CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE



Annual Report 2019-20



COVER PHOTOS

Top Row, Left to Right: Finn Graf, 2nd grader at Gateway College Prep School; Kenneth Horace from Beatrice Mayes at the Houston “Rally at the Park”; Odyssey Academy Bay Area virtual class; Titus Carr from MeyerPark Charter School

Bottom Row, Left to Right: Esperanza Ortega, 8th grader at Gateway College Prep School; Khali Jolliffe, student at School of Science and Technology Northwest; Ryleigh Wyatt from Beatrice Mayes at the Houston “Rally at the Park”; Austin Achieve Polar Bears hosts a ribbon-cutting for their brand new high school building (John Armbrust, Founder & CEO, Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison, and Mackee Mason, High School Principal)

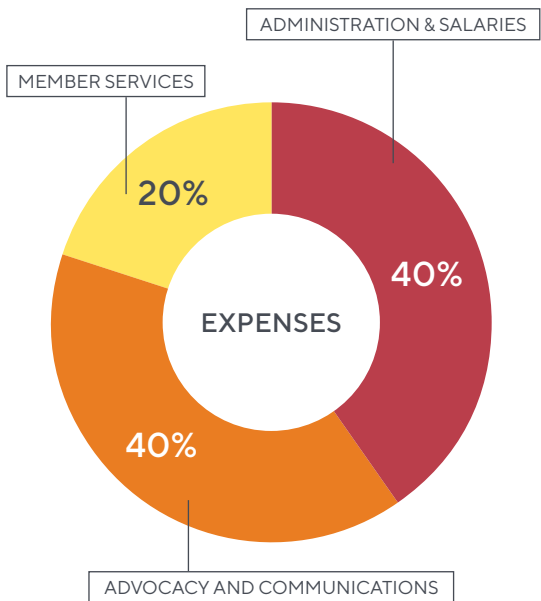
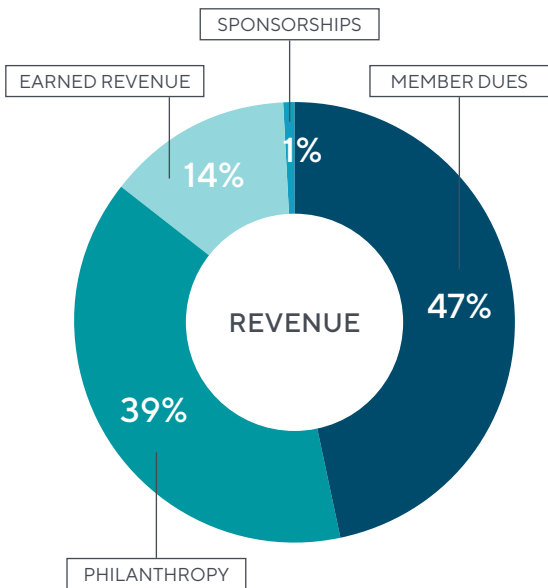
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- Katrina Corte**
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FINANCES



Friends,

This was a momentous year for charter schools and for every Texan. 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the passage of Texas's charter school law. In 1995, leaders from both parties came together to support visionary educators who wanted the freedom to teach in new ways and make higher quality education accessible to every student. By bringing innovation to public education, they sought to spur improvement in schools across Texas.

From their very beginning, charter schools have been champions of change. They've reimaged education with students at the center, closed racial and economic achievement gaps, and helped special education students flourish. They've rethought everything about education, from how to reward great teachers to how to bring greater fairness and equity to student discipline. Students who might never have dreamed of going to college are now proud college graduates because they attended a charter school. As a result, millions of families have embraced charter schools; and this year **320,000 students** are learning in Texas charter schools.

By any measure, charter schools have delivered tremendous benefits to Texas's students, families, and communities. We were hoping to spend more time celebrating these successes this year. Unfortunately, the global COVID-19 pandemic upended our plans as it did for so many others. Our hearts break for the families who have been touched by the disease. At the same time, our hearts have been lifted by the countless examples of charter schools bringing critical help to those in need—delivering meals to students and families, donating medical supplies to hospitals and nursing homes, or using their own technology to create protective gear for frontline medical workers.

Charter schools also used their freedom to be nimble and adaptive when learning had to move online. They distributed computers and WiFi hotspots to students who needed them. They championed rapid change to keep students connected to school and keep learning moving forward.

This year we were also reminded of how much further our nation has to go in healing the wounds of racism. This is an issue that directly affects many of our students, teachers, and families. For 25 years, a core mission of charter schools has been to promote educational opportunity across racial, ethnic, and income lines—to help students overcome obstacles and build a foundation for lifelong success. We've made great progress, but we have so much more to do.

Building on the experiences and successes of the past 25 years, Texas charter schools are ready to keep growing and improving to provide the innovative, high-quality education students need to thrive in the 21st century workforce. TPCSA has never been prouder of our schools than we have been this year, and it's been a privilege to support them as they deliver on their promise to Texas's students.

Sincerely,



Starlee Coleman
CEO





Jose Mejia, 2020 graduate
from Raul Yzaguirre School
for Success High School

CHAMPIONING POLICY CHANGE

DID YOU KNOW?

20% more charter
students graduate
with AP or IB credit.

TPCSA works regularly with state and local lawmakers to ensure that charter school interests are represented when policy decisions are being made. The Texas legislature did not meet in 2020, but TPCSA spent the year engaging lawmakers on current issues and **building a strong, sector-wide foundation** for the 2021 Legislative Session.

We help member schools **build new and stronger relationships with their lawmakers**. We **train public charter school teachers to become advocates** for their schools and students. We **engage business and community leaders** who have a stake in making sure that Texas has a strong workforce for years to come. We work to **remove regulatory obstacles** that infringe on the flexibility and innovation that allow charters to be their best. And, we're continuing to grow our coalition of partners so lawmakers hear from the groups they trust by **broadening our coalition to 16 partners**, with more than 12 taking action on our community's behalf.

When COVID-19 forced much of our work online, we worked double time to keep schools and policymakers connected, so charter schools stayed top-of-mind for lawmakers and regulators.

ENGAGING LAWMAKERS

In 2019-2020, TPCSA helped organize visits by 53 local, state, and federal lawmakers to charter school campuses or with school leaders, both in-person and virtually. We also provided critical information to dozens more state legislators to ensure they had the facts about charter schools as they shaped their education agendas.

Throughout the year, we created opportunities for schools to make authentic connections with policymakers:

- In December, we invited all Travis County Delegation staffers to join us for a lunch and a school tour in Austin. Throughout May and June, we hosted **six virtual roundtables** for state and local lawmakers across Central Texas.
- When some families in Houston began to go without access to school meals during the pandemic, TPCSA surveyed Houston charters and communicated with the offices of 12 state representatives and six state senators about how our schools were **continuing to provide meals** to the community.
- In May, we hosted a virtual briefing about the current state of play in Texas policy connecting more than **200 charter supporters** with education chairmen **Senator Larry Taylor** and **Representative Dan Huberty**.

“Keep doing the great work you’re doing. And keep reminding people about who you’re serving—the families who need and deserve a great school.”

Senator Larry Taylor
(R-Friendswood)

SENATE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN



Eliza McClendon from Beatrice Mayes at the Houston “Rally at the Park”



11th graders Abigail Gracia, Evelin Campos, and Valery Rafael from Raul Yzaguirre School for Success High School

ENGAGING REGULATORS

As part of our ongoing strategic plan implementation, TPCSA created the Director of Regulatory Affairs role to bolster our efforts to achieve regulatory reforms and block rules that hinder charters from serving families well. TPCSA's efforts led to several important rules changes this year:



Teacher Incentive Allotment Rules: TPCSA successfully advocated that charter schools have more flexibility when designing teacher evaluations.



Teacher Certification: TPCSA participated in the SBOE Workgroup on Teacher Quality, resulting in more flexibility that allows public charter schools to become and remain a continuing education entity, helping charter teachers renew their certification.



Charter School Performance Framework (CSPF): TPCSA worked with charters to submit comments to proposed rules changes to the CSPF. Noteworthy outcomes that reflected our requests include:

- A requirement that schools have 50% of their students in tested grades by year 3 was revised to give schools **two additional years** to reach this threshold.
- TEA modified the CSPF formula to **give more weight to a charter's A-F score** when considering approving expansion amendments; and, based on a new tiering system, all academically acceptable charters (rated A-C) can expand.
- TEA modified the CSPF formula so that **Charter FIRST has more weight** in the Financial Framework.
- TEA **eliminated the Texas Records Exchange (TREx)** indicator until modifications are made to TREx that reflect realistic standards.



Funding: Funding for summer school will now follow the student—previously, ISDs were set to be paid when their students attended summer school at a charter.

DID YOU KNOW?

Twice as many ELL students at charter schools master English.

Acting Quickly in Response to COVID-19

When COVID-19 disrupted education across the state, TPCSA advocated for smart regulations to ensure charters had the flexibility to serve families well during the crisis, including:

- Providing funding for charters that grew when charters served new students who turned to them during the crisis.
- Successfully advocating for charter schools to receive funds for private and homeschool transfer students, making sure charter schools receive millions of dollars in student funding for the new children they are serving.

TEACHER ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

TPCSA's Teacher Advocacy Leadership Institute (TALI) is the only year-long advocacy fellowship for public charter school teachers in the country. 2019-20 marked TALI's second year, with 24 teachers participating—double our initial cohort. Our program helps teachers strengthen their leadership and storytelling skills, expand their knowledge and use of social media, and increase their understanding and awareness of education policy.

In total, we engaged **116 charter teachers** this year:

- **82** teachers attended regional TALI training events in Houston, Austin, and Dallas.
- **38** teachers visited the State Capitol to meet with education and policy staffers.
- **Three** teachers published columns about their experience at a charter school.

We're excited to build on this progress with our next TALI cohort in the 2020-21 school year, which includes 28 diverse charter school teachers from across Texas.



2019-20 TALI teachers

"Given our state's diverse educational landscape, vast differences in classroom experiences abound. Participating in a candid discussion with charter school teachers provided valuable insight, especially in regard to the challenges facing our educators amid the current pandemic"

Tom Maynard

SBOE Member,
District 10 (R-Florence)





From left to right, students Telissa Miller, Christian Caracheo, and Nancy Nguyen from Heritage Academy

BUILDING THE CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS COMMAND CENTER

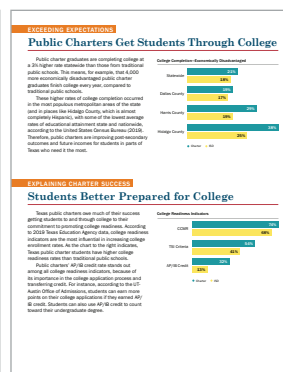
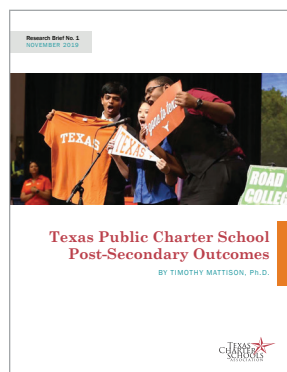
DID YOU KNOW?

Black students attending charter schools meet academic standards at higher percentages in **every subject** and **every tested grade level**.

As charter schools across Texas champion change in their communities, TPCSA makes sure that audiences around the state—and beyond—hear about the great work they're doing. This year, for the first time ever, TPCSA spearheaded a strategic communications plan for the charter community, developing collateral around research-backed messages and themes, creating and distributing original research that addresses common criticisms, and engaging with voters in the media and on social media.

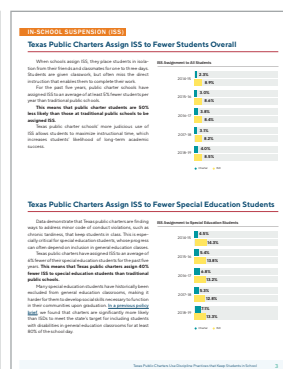
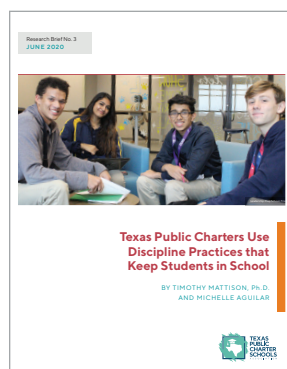
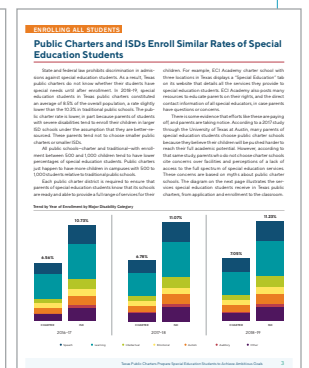
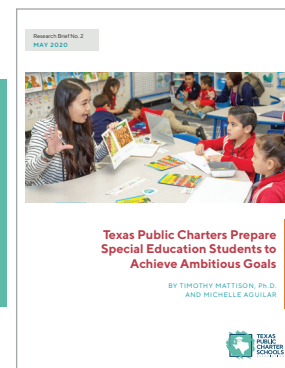
We have sharpened our messaging to ensure we're conveying what people need to hear about public charter schools:

- Charter schools are **preparing the future workforce**
- Charter schools are **complements to ISDs**
- Charter schools are **high-quality** and **accountable**



Texas Public Charter School Post-Secondary Outcomes: We found strong rates of college enrollment, readiness, and completion for public charter school students. For example, English learners and students with functional needs at charter schools are about twice as likely to attend college as their ISD counterparts.

Texas Public Charters Prepare Special Education Students to Achieve Ambitious Goals: More public charters than ISDs meet the state's goal for including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Charter schools also have a higher success rate in helping special education students meet grade-level reading standards.



Texas Public Charters Use Discipline Practices that Keep Students in School: Discipline rates are lower in Texas charter schools than in ISDs. Special needs students were assigned in-school suspensions 40% less in charter schools over the past five years, and Black and Hispanic students at charter schools are three to four times less likely to be assigned an in-school suspension than their ISD peers.



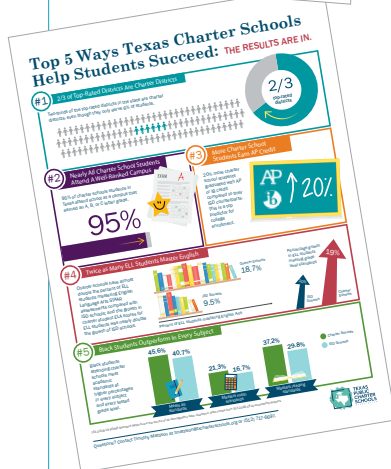
PROVIDING COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

TPCSA helps charter school leaders communicate more effectively by developing toolkits and collateral to use when speaking with lawmakers, reporters, and the public.

We created resources charter schools can use in their communities including the **What is a Charter School?** brochure in English and Spanish, a messaging guide, a slide deck presentation that any school can brand, and a step-by-step checklist for hosting elected officials, complete with communications templates. All are available on our newly redesigned website.

Additionally, TPCSA published three documents that easily explain what charter schools are, and the ways in which charter schools support academic achievement among students.

- **What You Need to Know About Public Charter Schools in Texas**
- **Top 5 Ways Texas Charters Help Students Succeed**
- **25 Years of Charter School Law: A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats**



When schools moved to online learning in the spring, TPCSA produced a series of four videos thanking teachers for their commitment to their students and families and shared them on social media.

SHAPING THE NARRATIVE THROUGH TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Communications is a 24/7 process and there are more ways than ever for charter supporters—and our opponents—to get their messages to wide audiences. We're proud of the work we've done to cultivate positive coverage in traditional media outlets and social media. Our rapid response work also ensures that no attack on charter schools will go unmet.

This year, TPCSA saw nearly **20 percent growth** across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter using inspiring stories from charter schools, research-backed data, and compelling infographics.

Working with members of the community, we published **eight op-eds** penned by school leaders, teachers, and TPCSA staff.

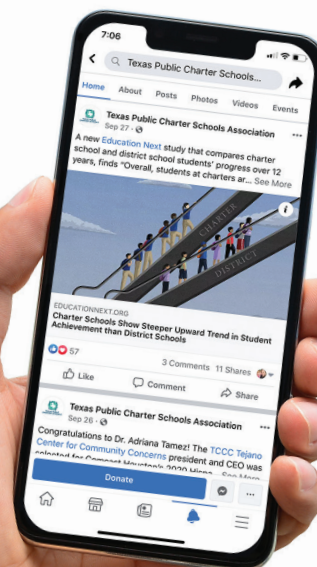
We built relationships with reporters, connecting them with schools and providing accurate and timely information, resulting in **24 articles** that positioned charters positively or effectively balanced out a negative story.



HOUSTON **CHRONICLE**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Dallas Morning News





Emma St. Pierre, student at School of Science and Technology Northwest

PROMOTING CHARTER SCHOOL QUALITY AND GROWTH

Our movement is diverse across geographies, students served, and school models. To support our dynamic community, we provide year-round, affordable training and resources for charter schools. This year, we re-examined our training and support resources so they would be best-in-class.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS THROUGH COVID-19

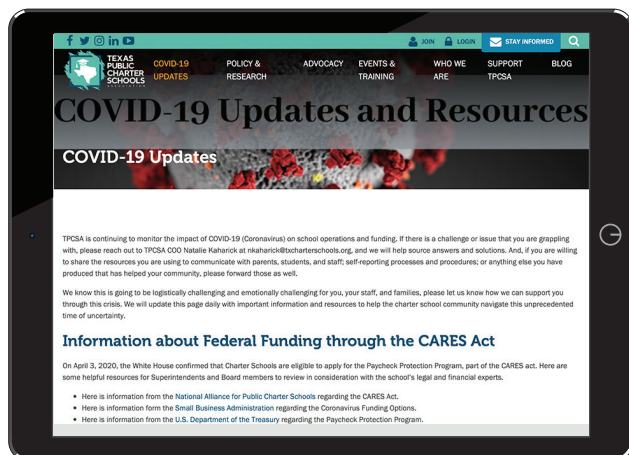
As the threat of coronavirus spread, and the need for immediate guidance and resources became apparent, TPCSA began delivering an array of trainings, created a repository of resources, and ensured our school leaders were informed and prepared to respond as effectively as possible.

Beginning in March, TEA Commissioner Mike Morath hosted daily and then weekly calls to provide critical updates for schools. Our staff joined every call and summarized these calls for our members, providing supplementary resources and guidance to address any issues raised by the TEA.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2019–20, charter school administrators and board members completed **3,582** on-demand courses offered by TPCSA at no cost.

Within the first 24 hours of school closures in Austin, TPCSA created a new webpage dedicated to COVID-19 resources that were specific to charter schools.



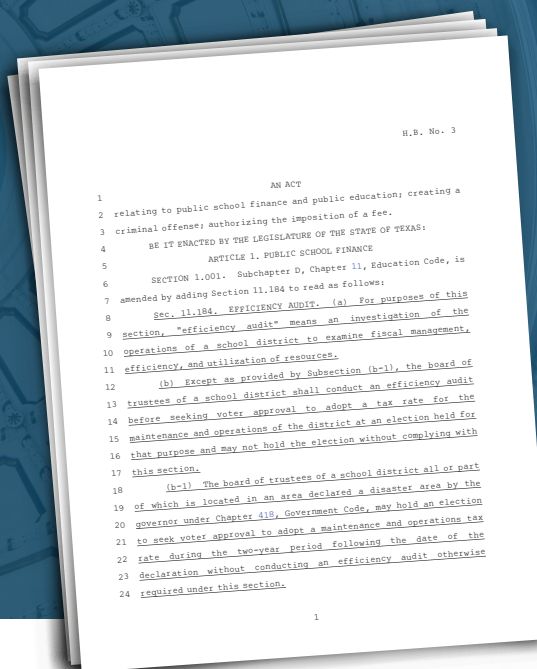
TPCSA initiated and organized a series of calls regarding the rapid response to COVID-19 to hear from experts, share resources and best practices, and answer questions. Topics included:

- Distance Learning for Special Populations
- Student Safety & Mental Health While Distance Learning
- Communicating with Stakeholders
- Fundraising and Philanthropic Engagement
- Student Recruitment

House Bill 3

In 2019, the Texas legislature passed House Bill 3, a sweeping school finance and policy law that will have a major impact on education—including many benefits for charter school students. TPCSA collaborated with policy partners to deliver a five-part series on the new requirements. The topics for those sessions were:

- Teacher Incentive Allotment and New Teacher Mentor Allotment
- Overview of Key Programs & Funding
- Teacher Reading Academies & Early Childhood School Board Goals
- College, Career, and Military Readiness Goals
- Blended Learning, Bilingual Education Allotment, Special Education & Dyslexia, Additional Days School Year, Gifted & Talented





Dominic Broussard, student at MeyerPark Charter School



Sophia Cruz, student at School of Science and Technology Northwest



Valeria Cordova, 4th grade student at Clay Classical Academy

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AND EXPANSION

We are committed to supporting the growth of a high-quality public charter school community through new charter approvals and expansions of existing high-quality schools. TPCSA provides resources charter school leaders can tap to learn about best practices and seek guidance on how to approach issues related to school operations. In addition to training videos and messaging collateral, the TPCSA member portal includes resources such as toolkits and model policies; compliance calendars; checklists; and budget planning tools and calculators. We continue to update and add to these resources to help charter schools deliver the highest level of academic, financial, and operational quality.

This year we partnered with Building Hope to provide a year-long training program for four newly awarded schools chartered to open in August 2020 as part of Generation 24. We supported four applicant groups through the Generation 25 application process. And we joined Bellwether Education Partners in supporting four high-performing, small-sized charter schools develop comprehensive strategic plans to grow to serve high school students.

DID YOU KNOW?

95% of charter school students attend a well-ranked campus.



In September 2019, TPCSA partnered with the District Charter Alliance, the TEA, and the Progressive Policy Institute to host 17 high-performing out-of-state charter networks and nine Texas ISDs interested in launching a district-charter partnership. We led discussions around why the future of charter school growth, innovation, and district-charter collaboration is here in Texas. Presenters included Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath; TEA Associate Commissioner for School System Support, Innovation, and Charters Joe Siedlecki; and Progressive Policy Institute's Director of Reinventing America's Schools David Osborne.



2019
TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOLS
Conference

Mia Rodriguez, School of Science and Technology

TPCSA’s annual charter school conference brings together people from across the charter school community to share experiences, learn from each other, and hear from leading lawmakers and experts in the education field. Our event in October 2019 drew more than 1,600 participants to San Antonio.

Each year, we recognize the Texas Charter School Leader of the Year and the Texas Charter School Teacher of the Year. This year we were proud to honor Dr. Jennifer Goodman from Odyssey Academy in Galveston as the Leader of the Year and Theresa Gray from Harmony School of Innovation in Katy as Teacher of the Year.



From left to right: Sharif El-Mekki and Ray Ankrum from *The 8 Black Hands* podcast; TPCSA CEO Starlee Coleman with 2019 Charter Champion Donna Bahorich and Austin Achieve Founder & CEO John Armbrust; Gabriela Isabel Garza, New Frontiers Public Schools; Julia Wright, Superintendent of MeyerPark Charter School

From left to right: Chris Stewart, Editor of *Education Post*; TPCSA's Shree Medlock; 2019 Charter Stars: Chris Duke (Education Policy Analyst, Office of the Lt. Governor), Mary Lynn Pruneda (former education advisor, Office of the Governor), John Colyandro (former Senior Advisor and Policy Director, Office of the Governor), Patricia Vojack (former Chief of Staff, Texas Senator Pat Fallon); Amy Wilkins, Senior Vice President of Advocacy, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools



As superintendent of Odyssey Academy in Galveston since 2005, Dr. Jennifer Goodman has been instrumental in growing the Academy to a multi-campus district that serves 1,200 students. Notably, she has also served as a mentor for several fellow charter school superintendents, guiding them through the process as they sought their Texas Superintendent Certification. Dr. Goodman is also invested in giving back to her community, serving on committees and boards including the Family Service Center, Rotary Club, and at her church.

Leader of the Year: Dr. Jennifer Goodman from Odyssey Academy



At the Harmony School of Innovation in Katy, Theresa Gray has been an exemplary educator. In addition to serving as the social studies department chair, Gray teaches AP U.S. History, AP Macroeconomics, CTE Entrepreneurship, and CTE Social Media Marketing. Ms. Gray is known throughout her school community for the personalized attention she devotes to her students. Moreover, she maintains close communication with her students' families, ensuring they can play an impactful role in helping their children progress and grow.



Teacher of the Year: Theresa Gray from Harmony School of Innovation (right) with Dr. Gina Gregory, Chief Development Officer at Harmony School of Innovation



From left to right: Conference attendees enjoy the '80s party; Principals at IL Texas: Senta Wilson (left), Nanette Coleman (middle), Valerie Layne (right); attendees at *The 8 Black Hands* podcast session; Representative Barbara Gervin-Hawkins (D-San Antonio)



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