

# RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE



## Annual Report 2021-22



The TPCSA team at 2021 TXCharterCon

## OUR TEAM

### Starlee Coleman

Chief Executive Officer

### Jennifer Acevedo

Data & Research Analyst

### Bryce Adams

Vice President of Advocacy

### Renelle Bedell

Director of Operations

### Kara Belew

Senior Director of Regulatory Affairs

### Mallory Chesser

Development Writer

### Katrina Corte

Special Events Manager

### Missy Couch

Executive Assistant to the CEO

### Brandon Garcia

Director of Legislative Affairs

### Laurel Garcia

Director of Continuing Education

### Rebecca Gieskes

Managing Director of Advocacy

### Elizabeth Gunter

Development Project Manager

### Ryan Hecker

Managing Director, Charter Schools Now

### Natalie Kaharick

Chief Operating Officer

### Taylor Kerr

Advocacy & Communications Project Manager

### Ariele Kinney

Director of Regional Advocacy, North Texas

### London Lawrence

Director of Regional Advocacy, Central Texas

### Nadia Luna

Vice President of Member Engagement

### Ila Mar

Digital Director

### Shree' Medlock

Vice President of Strategic Engagement

### Chelbi Mims

Director of Regional Advocacy, Southeast Texas

### Jessica Shopoff

Director of Policy

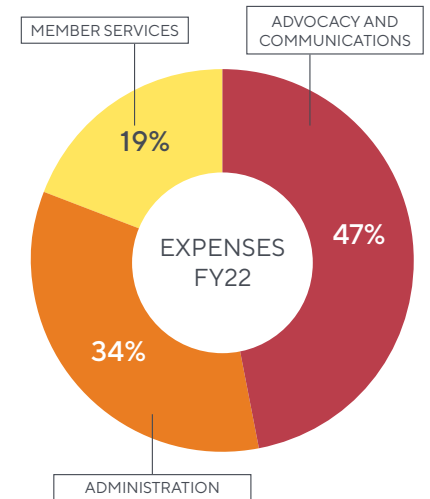
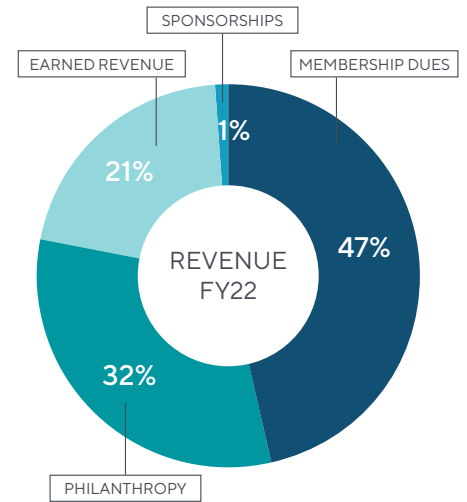
### Tara Speegle

Director of Regional Advocacy, West Texas

### Brian Whitley

Vice President of Communications

## FINANCES



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### Sehba Ali

KIPP Public Charter Schools

### Julia Wright

MeyerPark Charter School

### Cynthia Trigg

Evolution Academy

### Brent Wilson

Life School

## COVER PHOTOS

**Top Row, Left to Right:** SBOE Member Tom Maynard at Gateway College Preparatory School; Students from School of Science and Technology rally for charter schools in Washington, D.C.; The Schulman, Lopez, Hoffer & Adelstein booth at TXCharterCon gets a visit from Vanguard Academy; YES Prep alumna Stephanie Requena

**Bottom Row, Left to Right:** Teacher Advocate of the Year Judy Moore (left) honored at TXCharterCon; Anne Frank Inspire Academy; IDEA Public Schools parents rally for charter schools in Washington, D.C.; Anne Frank Inspire Academy



# Friends,

The Legislative Session in 2021 brought the public charter school community together like never before. Those months opened the first chapter in a new Texas story — one in which our educators, families, teachers, and supporters act in concert to *demand* that students come first.

But even before the ink was dry on bills signed into law, new challenges began coming into focus. Supporters in the Texas House and Senate retired. The pandemic complicated the day-to-day workings of schools for a third straight year. And shooters unleashed horror at a charter school in Houston and a district school in Uvalde.

How did Texas charter schools respond? They rose to the challenge.

This year, families again turned to public charter schools in record numbers — and educators answered the call with their trademark creativity, passion, and dedication. Total enrollment grew to 375,000 students across nearly 900 campuses.

There's no doubt this community is leading our state forward. That's why I'm incredibly proud to share with you the ways TPCSA has also risen to the challenge. Our motto is "winning in Austin" and we're incredibly focused on getting that done — during the upcoming 88th Legislative Session and beyond.

Our team spent the year building a foundation for statewide advocacy that will pay dividends well into the future. The Association hired new regional advocacy directors in South and West Texas as we embarked upon an ambitious plan to dramatically expand the breadth of lawmaker engagement statewide. During the last 12 months alone, nearly 80% of Texas public charter schools in our major regions have taken at least one advocacy action, and collectively, they've connected with a total of more than 100 lawmakers.

Of course, lawmakers need to hear the facts and positive stories about Texas charter schools in multiple ways — not just from advocates themselves. We took our communications command center to the next level, creating five powerful research reports and one-pagers; running 15 strategic social media campaigns; and refining a new "surround sound" approach to delivering our most important messages across multiple platforms.

Finally, we invested in proactive, real-time support for our school leaders and members. Our team worked hand-in-glove with the Texas Education Agency on addressing regulatory pain points, and we achieved some resounding wins that protect the time and resources of charter schools statewide. TPCSA also continued our rapid expansion of "Charter CEntal," a one-stop shop for robust training resources and live webinars. Our members completed 17,000 training hours this year — some of them during our first (and wildly successful) hybrid conference.

All of this to say that when the rubber hits the road in 2023 during the 88th Legislative Session, charter schools will be ready. But this work — yours and ours — is about even more than that.

Texas public charter schools are preparing students for the lives they want to lead. As a mom and a professional, I'm honored to help protect and champion this community and its legacy for future generations.

Thank you for your support — and for always rising to the challenge.

Sincerely,



**Starlee Coleman**  
CEO



TPCSA CEO Starlee Coleman (left) and Teacher Advocate of the Year Judy Moore at TXCharterCon's Silver Soiree

# POWERFUL ADVOCACY

As Texas counts down to the 88th Legislative Session, we're preparing for lift off.

We're dedicated to winning in Austin. In order to achieve lasting policy change that helps students, TPCSA organizes the public charter school community to connect with lawmakers and decisively engage in the conversations that shape our education system.

The Association also partners with our sister 501c4 organization, Charter Schools Now (CSN), to support Texas charter schools by informing voters and educating lawmakers and candidates. CSN works to ensure that all of our supporters are empowered at the ballot box and connected with opportunities to take action on behalf of educational opportunity in Texas.

This year, TPCSA both broadened and deepened our advocacy — covering more of the state, giving more of our schools a powerful voice, and providing even more sophisticated training to emerging advocate leaders.



Rep. Jared Patterson at Leadership Preparatory School

## DEEPENING LAWMAKER RELATIONSHIPS

State and local lawmakers need to understand the positive impact of public charter schools. Our five directors of regional advocacy — including new hires based in West Texas and San Antonio — create opportunities for schools to showcase their successes and advocate on behalf of all Texas charter schools.

In the last year alone, TPCSA has helped our member schools complete **140 engagements** with **more than 100 lawmakers**. Across Central, Southeast, and North Texas, **nearly 80% of charter schools** had at least one advocacy engagement.

We're especially proud of the way our work builds over time — toward a public charter school community unified in its commitment to advocacy and active in every corner of Texas. Since 2019:

- Nearly every charter district has had at least one touchpoint with a state lawmaker
- More than 20 school leaders, charter parents, and charter teachers have testified in committee hearings and before the SBOE
- 11,000 people have taken a direct-to-lawmaker action online

### Lawmaker Visits

There's absolutely nothing more compelling for a lawmaker than seeing charter school campuses firsthand. TPCSA makes facilitating these visits a top priority — and it's paying off.

Public charter school campuses hosted about **90 visits** with lawmakers this year. They attended special events like those for Black History Month; connected with students, such as reading to them during National Read Across America Week; and observed the many creative ways our member schools are meeting students' needs.



Rep. Jarvis Johnson at Harmony School of Advancement

Rep. Sheryl Cole at Austin Achieve

Rep. Oscar Longoria at IDEA San Benito



Sen. Paul Bettencourt at School of Science and Technology Spring



Rep. Alex Dominguez at Raul Yzaguirre Middle School (San Juan)



Sen. Angela Paxton at ILTexas Garland



SBOE Member Tom Maynard at Gateway College Preparatory School (Georgetown)

### Honoring Our Champions

TPCSA celebrated the steadfast support of 22 Charter Champions, the state lawmakers who stand up and speak out for our schools and families. All award winners were presented with a one-of-a-kind piece of student artwork at a public charter school campus in their district.

## MAKING CAPITOL CONNECTIONS

The TPCSA team continually engages directly with lawmakers and their offices so they understand the needs of our community, always have access to the latest facts and research, and have a personal point of contact for any questions.

**Over the past several months, our team pounded the pavement inside the Capitol – meeting with the offices of 73 state lawmakers and 11 winners of recent primary elections.**

TPCSA placed a special emphasis this year on strengthening our relationships with legislative leadership, such as the Speaker of the House.



“TPCSA was effective primarily with giving accurate data. We’re such a data-driven society. And the Texas Legislature is like that as well. And I think providing the information on, not just they’re educating kids, but how they’re doing it, how they’re doing it differently...”

**Chief of Staff** (R)

“Texas Public Charter Schools Association’s engagement is objective. I think they’re objective, and I think they’re thoughtful.”

**Representative, Texas Legislature** (R)

# Let's Taco 'Bout

WHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS REALLY SERVE



## A HUNGER FOR BUSTING MYTHS

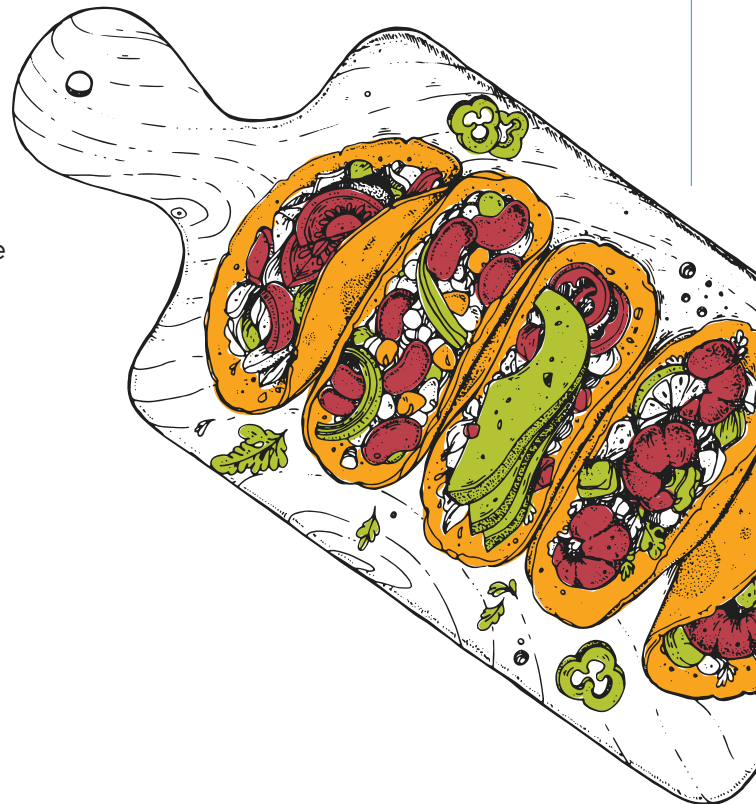
When misinformation starts circulating at the Capitol, we make time to *taco* 'bout it.

This year, TPCSA launched a series of “myth-busting” briefings for legislative staffers that equipped them with data and connected them with charter school experts (and it didn’t hurt that we served tacos).

- In October 2021, we refuted the idea that charter school growth is “out of control” with a briefing on the expansion process for our schools. Representative Barbara Gervin-Hawkins and NYOS Superintendent Kathleen Zimmermann joined us to walk attendees through how charter growth *actually* works.
- In April 2022, we dispelled the myth that charter schools are “for privileged students” with a briefing on who our schools *really* serve. Representative Dan Huberty joined our discussion of original TPCSA research showing that charter schools serve a far higher share of the lowest-income Texas students than ISDs.



TPCSA CEO Starlee Coleman (top) and Rep. Barbara Gervin-Hawkins (bottom) address legislative staff at the Texas Capitol



## EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ADVOCACY LEADERS

### IT'S A FACT

To date, **90** Texas public charter school teachers have completed our advocacy fellowship program and **258** parents have been trained.

In 2021-22, TPCSA continued to refine and expand its flagship programs that recruit, train, and mobilize voices from our community. The programs intensively develop the skills of advocates to create sustained momentum and deep relationships with lawmakers.

These programs are unlike any others in the country — for now. The Association is working with three other states to replicate these innovative training approaches so that more educators and families, from coast to coast, are equipped to advocate for high-quality charter schools.

### *Advocacy Leadership Institute for Teachers*

The fourth annual Advocacy Leadership Institute empowered 28 charter school teachers from diverse backgrounds with the skills they need to make a difference.

Teacher fellows learned how to build authentic relationships with lawmakers, write op-eds, testify about their experiences at charter schools, wield the power of social media, and invest their peers in advocacy to create a “village of supporters.”

And they didn't just learn those skills — they put them into action. Together, teachers took **958 total advocacy actions** on behalf of Texas public charter schools. For example:

- Austin-based fellows Hannah Burkhauser and Isaiah Johnson testified before the State Board of Education in support of opening new public charter schools. Their personal stories — and graceful answers to some hostile questions — left no doubt about the way our community helps students thrive.
- Tamural Frierson's interview with the *Houston Defender*, a historic Black newspaper in Houston, led to an article whose headline says it all: “Families of color choosing public charters, better education option.”
- Ryan Otero, a fellow from El Paso, helped 100 of his fellow teachers introduce themselves to lawmakers and make sure their perspectives are heard.

The program also achieved a milestone when Dr. Alissa Russell became the first fellow to run for elected office. She campaigned for a Dallas seat on the State Board of Education and advanced to a runoff election — sending a powerful message on behalf of the sector.



Dr. Alissa Russell, an educator at Life School in Dallas, ran for a seat on the State Board of Education.



## Parent Advocate Leadership Program

For the first time this year, TPCSA provided charter school parents with the opportunity to receive sustained, in-depth advocacy training. The Parent Advocate Leadership program “certified” **54 Texas mothers and fathers** in the skills that will help move the needle with lawmakers.

The PALs completed a three-month training program where they learned to share their personal stories effectively, organize events and meetings, and leverage Twitter to get noticed. TPCSA offered two cycles during the year to make the program more accessible to more parents.

In total, Texas public charter school parents took **374 advocacy actions** – including meetings with members of Congress, campus tours with state and local lawmakers, and virtual roundtables with fellow parents.

## IN PARENTS’ OWN WORDS

### What Was Most Powerful About the PAL Program?



“This program taught me the benefits of advocating for charter schools as a parent. The importance of parent-teacher relationship building.”

#### **APRIL CULHANE**

*School of Science and  
Technology Hill Country  
(San Antonio)*



“The parent advocacy group has definitely made a difference in my life and the lives of my children...It has boosted my opportunity for involvement and inspired me to inspire other parents to be active participants.”

#### **YESIKA DIAZ**

*Harmony School of Technology  
and Harmony School of  
Advancement (Houston)*



“Increased awareness of the importance of engaging elected officials and candidates.”

#### **KEITH BRAINARD**

*Meridian World School  
(Austin)*

## Advocates in Action: Testifying Before the SBOE

In June, ALI teacher fellows and PALs stood up and spoke out. They testified before the State Board of Education, urging board members to allow new public charter schools to open in Texas. Their skills — and powerful stories — shined through.



From left: Gregory Harrington, Hannah Burkhauser, and Isaiah Johnson testified before the Texas State Board of Education in June 2022.

“You and I have something in common. We all want families to be able to choose a school that works for their children without having to move or to pay for private education. We want what’s best for our children. Public charter schools like mine are making the education system stronger by meeting the needs of more students. We’re preparing more young people for success — in college, the workforce of the future, and the rest of their lives.”

**HANNAH BURKHAUSER**

*teacher at KIPP Texas in Austin*

“It is our sacred duty to ensure that all students — regardless of color or zip code — can attend schools that help them reach their full academic and personal potential. And we must act sooner, not later. Justice delayed is justice denied.”

**ISAIAH JOHNSON**

*teacher at Austin Achieve Public Schools*

“It’s quite simple ... One size does not fit all! Public charter schools give parents an alternative learning model for their children. I think that public charter schools have more flexibility to adjust and be innovative in teaching. They still have to excel academically, and I believe that these models are very important for this generation of students, especially with such high learning losses during the pandemic.”

**GREGORY HARRINGTON**

*parent at Harmony Science Academy (Austin)*

# The Washington Post

“They’re beating on charter schools and they just need to back off.”

Gregory Harrington as quoted in the Washington Post, Biden administration softens new charter school rules (May 11, 2022)

Students from School of Science and Technology (top) and parents from IDEA Public Schools (middle) were among nearly 150 Texans who rallied for charter schools in Washington, D.C.

## Parents Tell Federal Officials: Back Off

In the spring, the US Department of Education proposed new rules for the Charter Schools Program, which awards startup grants that help new campuses open. The rules would have created massive amounts of red tape — application requirements so voluminous, burdensome, and contradictory that it would have effectively ended the program.

Working with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, we helped organize an unprecedented response by parent advocates. In May, 147 mothers and fathers from Texas dropped everything and flew to Washington. For some, it was their first time ever setting foot on an airplane.

These families did media interviews, grabbed bullhorns, rallied outside the White House, and met with Congress. In the end, they emerged victorious. The US DOE announced over the summer it was rolling back the worst of the proposed new rules — paving the way for great new public charter schools to welcome more students in Texas and beyond.



## BUILDING SCHOOLS' ADVOCACY CAPACITY

In 2020, TPCSA invested in statewide advocacy capacity by launching a multiyear grant program to support school-based advocacy staff. We continued to refine that program this year and have created a powerful coalition of more than 25 charter school districts statewide that meet monthly.

Multiple participants have created their own full-fledged advocacy programs for parents and teachers, including:

- YES Prep launched its own teacher training program in 2021 to train teacher captains and support them to build relationships with policymakers.
- Compass Rose staff created a scope and sequence of advocacy training for teacher participants and has staff dedicated to lawmaker meetings and visits.
- Austin Achieve has tapped a teacher to lead by example. This teacher has been thoroughly trained and highly engaged, and she now trains other staff members during professional development.



Rep. Jarvis Johnson visits with YES Prep students at the Texas Capitol






## SOLVING REGULATORY CHALLENGES

Public charter schools face a gauntlet of regulatory obstacles and red tape that impedes them from doing what they do best — unleashing innovation and flexibility so that students receive the highest-quality education.

TPCSA works directly with the Governor’s Office, Texas Education Agency (TEA), the State Board of Education (SBOE), coalition partners, and our member schools to remove these hurdles.

We’ve deepened these relationships this year and taken critical steps toward ensuring that our community has a permanent seat at the table. For example: TEA now conducts quarterly meetings with charter schools (with separate sessions based on their size) and plans to designate a cabinet of charter school superintendents.

The results are clear, with more pain points being addressed more quickly. Our 2021-22 regulatory wins include:

-  Charter schools’ grades based on the Charter FIRST system for financial accountability will become more fair after TEA incorporated COVID/local revenue calculation relief.
-  Charter schools will no longer be financially penalized for accidentally educating a student living outside the school’s geographic boundary.
-  The new common application for student enrollment has been streamlined to make data reporting — especially waitlist data — much easier for charter school administrators.
-  TEA not only made charter school expansion decisions within the 60-day window required by statute, but the average decision was out to schools in 22 days.
-  Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton issued an official opinion that cities do not have the power under state law to set up discriminatory zoning, permitting, and fee structures for charter schools.

## *A \$10 Million Victory for Texas Families*

Many Texas families turned to public charter schools during the pandemic. With the number of students on charter school waitlists rising to **58,000** this year, TPCSA advocated for the state to allocate federal recovery dollars toward supporting the growth of charter schools that are serving students well.

In December, Governor Greg Abbott honored that request by announcing that **\$10 million** from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds would be dedicated to Charter School Incubating and Replicating Grants. As a result, passionate and dedicated educators will be able to open their doors to more families.



“The State of Texas remains committed to students and their success in our education systems — that includes ensuring parents have an option to send their kids to a high-quality charter school...

GOV. GREG ABBOTT



## A COMMUNITY-POWERED AGENDA FOR THE 88TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

During interim years, TPCSA canvasses our member schools to identify issues that can be addressed in upcoming legislative sessions. We not only broadened this process in 2022 to include more feedback opportunities, but also formalized a set of guiding principles for developing future policy goals.

**In partnership with our board of directors, TPCSA finalized three core values to guide our collective legislative priorities and held deep-dive sessions on the most pressing policy issues of today.**

The Association then cast a wide net for member schools' feedback, including multiple surveys and two policy town hall events. **More than 50 charter school districts** advised us. The final legislative agenda, adopted in June, includes four proactive priority items related to equitable resources and growth — as well as defeating negative bills we know are coming.

### Students First

Students should have the freedom to discover knowledge and be prepared for purpose-filled lives. Leaders and teachers should be given the freedom to collaborate with their school communities and meet their needs — including by creating innovative curriculum, instructional models, and school policies.

### Access for All

All students deserve access to high-quality public educational options with equitable resources and facilities. Public schools should be able to open or expand with as few entry barriers as possible.

### Results Matter

Accountability isn't one-size-fits-all — it should be driven by the needs of school communities. Above all, it should incentivize schools to return value for students and respect teachers as professionals.

# COMMUNICATIONS COMMAND CENTER

At TPCSA, we identify the messages that move lawmakers, influencers, and the public. We then equip our community to tell the stories that bring those messages to life.

But that's not enough.

This year, the Association honed our “surround sound” approach — sharing powerful facts and perspectives across many platforms, using many messengers, and at many strategic moments. It's a winning formula for breaking through the noise.





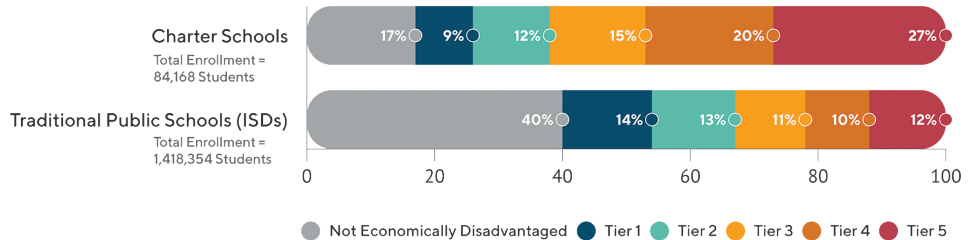
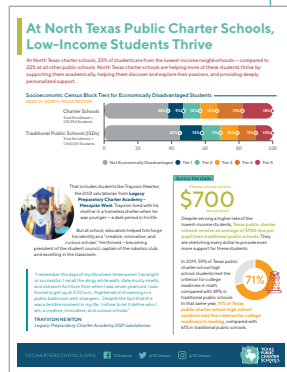
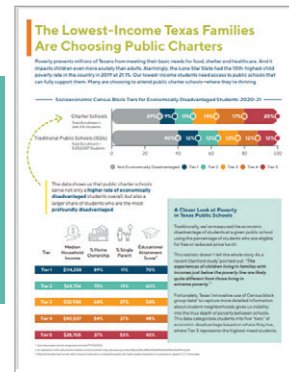
# DATA-DRIVEN STORYTELLING

Texas public charter schools are achieving extraordinary outcomes for students — and we have the receipts.

Our team unearths, analyzes, and breathes life into the data behind our community’s success. And we leverage our entire organization to make sure every key audience knows to focus their attention on these data-driven stories.

TPCSA published and promoted five pieces of original research this year:


**The Lowest-Income Families are Choosing Texas Public Charters:** Charter schools don’t just educate more low-income students than ISDs — they successfully serve more of the *lowest* income students, who face unique challenges. TPCSA became the first organization to ever obtain, and then analyze, this data.



**Understanding Governing Boards of Texas Public Charter Schools:** Did you know that accountability is more strict for public charter schools than other kinds of public schools? Our research report explained how charter school governing boards are empowered to make sure students are learning and growing — and more than 140 charter school board members shared the report with lawmakers.


**Texas Public Charter Schools Prepare Students for Kindergarten and Beyond:** Pre-K programs at public charter schools are fast-growing and wildly successful. We documented how our member schools are giving their littlest learners a running start into kindergarten – and preventing achievement gaps before they start.

Research Brief No. 8  
OCTOBER 2021



**Texas Public Charter Schools Prepare Children for Kindergarten and Beyond**

BY TIMOTHY MATTISON, Ph.D.



**TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PRE-K PROGRAMS ARE BEATING THE ODDS**

Public charter schools are helping to close the achievement gap before it starts. Research shows that public charter schools have more success than traditional schools in preparing students for kindergarten. Public charter schools are also more likely to have pre-K programs that are high-quality and focused on social-emotional learning.

**Research in Texas helps reveal students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more prepared for kindergarten (85% vs 80% of public charter schools).**

**Public charter schools are more likely to have pre-K programs that are high-quality and focused on social-emotional learning (85% vs 75% of public charter schools).**

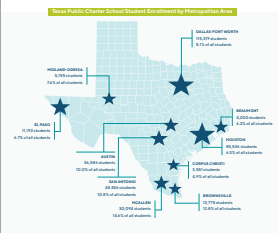
**Public charter schools are more likely to have pre-K programs that are high-quality and focused on social-emotional learning (85% vs 75% of public charter schools).**

**Public charter schools are more likely to have pre-K programs that are high-quality and focused on social-emotional learning (85% vs 75% of public charter schools).**

**Public Charter Schools Across Texas**  
All Texas students deserve a high-quality public education—no matter their zip code.

**896** public charter schools serving 1.2 million students across the state.

**7%** of all students in Texas are enrolled in public charter schools.



**Texas Public Charter School Student Enrollment by Metropolitan Area**

- HOUSTON: 1,100,000 students (17% of enrollment)
- EL PASO: 100,000 students (8% of enrollment)
- AMARILLO: 100,000 students (8% of enrollment)
- ATLANTA: 100,000 students (8% of enrollment)
- HOUSTON: 100,000 students (8% of enrollment)
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**But many families are still waiting**  
More than **58,000** Texas students are on charter school waitlists.

**Don't just take our word for it.**

**FAMILIES**  
"We have great hopes for our academic preparation, in classical curriculum, and a well-rounded education. The dedication and passion of the teachers is unparalleled. We have seen our children thrive for the past two years... We are so grateful for the opportunity to have our children attend a public charter school."

**STUDENTS**  
"The education received at YES Prep Northside gave me the opportunity to attend the school of my choice, and gave me the opportunity to think about what I wanted to do in the future. The small class sizes and individualized attention from the teachers helped me to excel in my studies. Many of whom still keep in contact with today!"

**TEACHERS**  
"Every child deserves quality education, and I know that charter schools can help focus on individual needs. This year, I have access to quality education and help that helps me as a teacher!"

**Alissa Strong**  
Alissa Strong, Director of Operations, YES Prep Northside

Texas public charter schools are helping students across the state. Every family deserves the same opportunity.

**Public Charter School Enrollment Across Texas:** Enrollment at Texas public charter schools increased yet again in the 2021-22 school year. We crunched the numbers statewide and broke down how many students in the largest metro areas are attending charters.

**Closing Achievement Gaps and Expanding Opportunities:** During Black History Month, we released a powerful compilation of the outcomes for Black students at Texas public charter schools. They're learning core academic skills, taking advanced courses, and enrolling in college at far higher rates than their peers statewide.

**Closing Achievement Gaps and Expanding Opportunities**

Public charter schools are helping to close the achievement gap before it starts. Research shows that public charter schools have more success than traditional schools in preparing students for kindergarten. Public charter schools are also more likely to have pre-K programs that are high-quality and focused on social-emotional learning.

**79%** of public charter schools offer advanced courses.

**22%** of public charter schools offer AP courses.

**64%** of public charter schools offer college enrollment.

**24.4%** of public charter schools offer dual credit.

**15.2%** of public charter schools offer dual enrollment.

**Public Charter Schools are Closing the Achievement Gap Before it Starts**

Public charter schools are helping to close the achievement gap before it starts. Research shows that public charter schools have more success than traditional schools in preparing students for kindergarten. Public charter schools are also more likely to have pre-K programs that are high-quality and focused on social-emotional learning.

**85%** of public charter schools have pre-K programs.

**85%** of public charter schools have high-quality pre-K programs.

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**85%** of public charter schools have high-quality pre-K programs.



## Surround Sound in Action

In March, TPCSA published powerful research showing just how many families from our state's lowest-income neighborhoods are choosing public charter schools for their children.

This is a remarkable story — a testament to the way our schools use their freedom and flexibility to expand opportunity for students who need it most. So we set to work making *sure* it would reach all of those who needed to hear it.

Here's what we organized to create true surround sound:

- Toolkits for our member schools that included plug-and-play graphics, social media templates, and sample articles for email newsletters
- Emails and in-person visits to get the key findings in front of Texas House members, Texas Senators, and the State Board of Education
- Briefings at the Capitol for legislative staff and journalists, in partnership with Rep. Dan Huberty, the author of the 2019 HB 3 school funding rewrite for the state of Texas
- A geo-targeted social media campaign that shared region-specific data from the research with tens of thousands of Texans
- A webinar for charter school educators featuring highlights from the data, case studies, and best practices for working with the lowest-income students



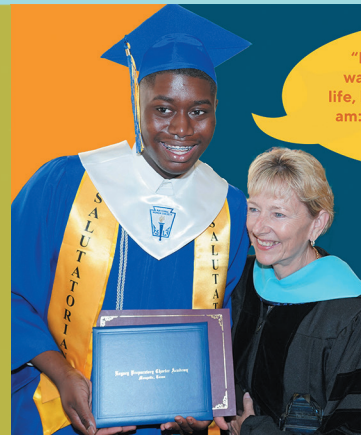
At Austin Achieve Public Schools, families have access to guidance counseling and social services on campus. They receive free bi-weekly meal kits with high-nutrition fruit, vegetables, and meats. And they can participate in lecture series at no cost on topics such as financial literacy.

Texas  
Public  
Charter  
Schools  
Care  
for the  
Whole  
Child



### Many charter schools support low-income students and families by:

- Connecting them with resources in times of need (Winter Storm Uri, pandemic)
- Removing barriers to learning by providing nutritious food, easy access to health clinics, and counseling



"Despite the fact that this was a terrible moment in my life, I refuse to let it define who I am: a creative, innovative, and curious scholar."

### From homeless to salutarian

Trayvion, a recent Texas public charter school graduate, lived in a homeless shelter as a child. But he became student council president, robotics club captain, and salutarian of his high school.



## HARNESSING THE POWER OF DIVERSE VOICES

The Texas public charter school community is incredibly diverse — educators, parents, students, alumni, board members, and other supporters who all believe deeply in educational opportunity.

They all deserve a megaphone. We captured their rich perspectives in fresh ways and made sure their voices reverberated in the halls of power and beyond.

### *Email “Drip Campaign” to Lawmakers*

This year, TPCSA emailed all state lawmakers and legislative staffers about once a month to share compelling stories, research, and updates. These regular “drips” of news from our community are memorable and personal — and are always paired with invitations to visit charter school campuses.

In these emails, lawmakers and staffers were introduced to:



Students such as **Molly DeWees**, who earned four healthcare industry certifications while in high school at Life School Waxahachie — and will study to become a neurosurgeon at Texas Tech.



Educators such as **LaDacia Austin**, the architect of a thriving pre-K program at The Rhodes School in East Houston where four-year-olds are becoming “full-blown readers.”



Alumni such as **Stephanie Requena**, whose teachers at YES Prep Northside in Houston are still helping guide her today as a student of political science and business economics at the University of Notre Dame.

### *Engaging Grassroots Supporters*

In 2020 and 2021, TPCSA built and expanded a database of charter school supporters statewide. We made sure this “grassroots army” had plenty of opportunities to engage during the last legislative session — and they delivered, with more than 10,000 people sending more than 50,000 emails to lawmakers.

After the session ended, we piloted a “keep warm” digital communications program to make sure these supporters continued to feel connected to the charter community. The program featured:

- Educational activities such as an interactive “Do You Know the Facts About Charters?”
- A signable letter to thank our charter school educators
- Inspirational videos and stories from across Texas



Our emails are read by:

**140** state lawmakers

**117** legislative staffers



## Test Your Charter School Knowledge

71% of our grassroots supporters answered this question correctly. Can you?

**When were public charter schools first created in Texas?**

- A** 1995
- C** 2008
- B** 2001
- D** 2015

Correct Answer: A

“As one who volunteered for many years with students from multiple charter schools in the Houston area, I assure you, they work! These schools provide an impressive and EFFECTIVE means of educating underserved children. It provides an opportunity that no other educational pathway can provide so intentionally and successfully.”

**Renee’ S.**

“Our 4 grandchildren (Grades 1 / 2 / 5 / 6 ) have benefited greatly from a Charter School ... especially in helping one with reading... Please permit such schools to start & to help other students.”

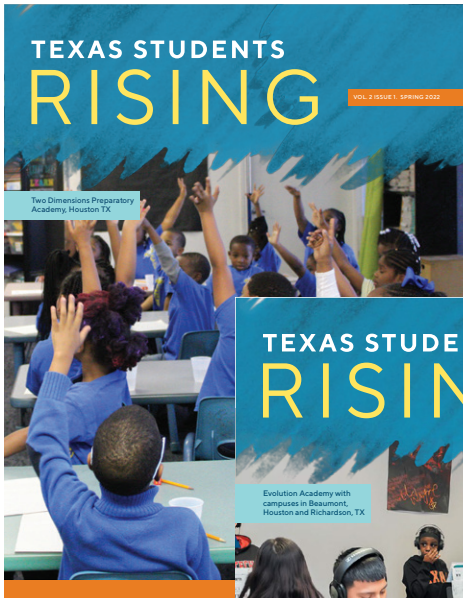
**Margie L.**

But even during an “off” year for the Legislature, there were opportunities for digital advocacy. Before the State Board of Education met in June to vote on whether new public charter schools could open, TPCSA mobilized grassroots support. Our community sent 300 emails to board members conveying the importance and urgency of those votes – in deeply personal terms.

### *Influencing the Influencers*

This year we expanded the distribution of TPCSA’s quarterly magazine, Texas Students Rising, to reach more than 6,700 of the state’s most influential political, civic, business, and religious leaders.

Each issue features profiles of parents, educators, and board members, as well as snappy summaries of the Association’s latest research.



"We're about hope, and we serve that student who has found themselves over-aged, under-credited so they find their way to CAN. What brings me fulfillment is that we now get that child back to their dream."

**Dr. James Ponce**

SUPERINTENDENT, TEXANS CAN ACADEMIES



Victor Wong, science teacher at George I. Sanchez Charter Schools



***The Tale of the Trailblazers***

The first public charter schools to open in Texas celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2021. TPCSA produced a special video to celebrate their remarkable legacy — a quarter century of student success — and share the story of these pioneers far and wide.



Dr. Adriana Tamez  
Superintendent of Schools, RYSS  
CEO, Tejano Center For Community Centers



Dr. James Ponce  
Superintendent, Texans Can Academies



Yasmin Bhatia  
CEO, Uplift Education

## EXPERT GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

It can be difficult for public charter schools to know what messages work best — how to explain who they are and what they do in a way that’s clear, persuasive, and memorable. TPCSA provides comprehensive coaching, including by hosting monthly community of practice meetings and offering ongoing and updated training in messaging, media relations, and other communications topics.

We believe in hands-on experience. For example, in April 2022, we hosted a mock lawmaker conversation about our lowest-income students research to help communications leads and school leaders talk about the data with lawmakers.

This year, TPCSA took the extra step of engaging with our partners at Ballast Research to interview dozens of lawmakers from state and local government about their priorities for education and what resonates with them. Then we shared those findings, along with toplines from other detailed public opinion polling, with our member schools.

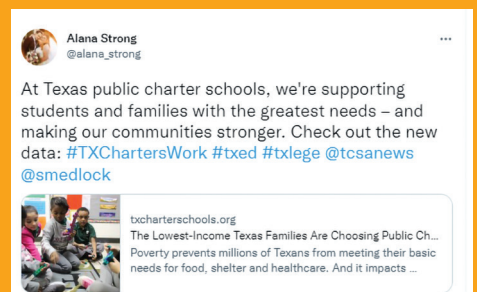
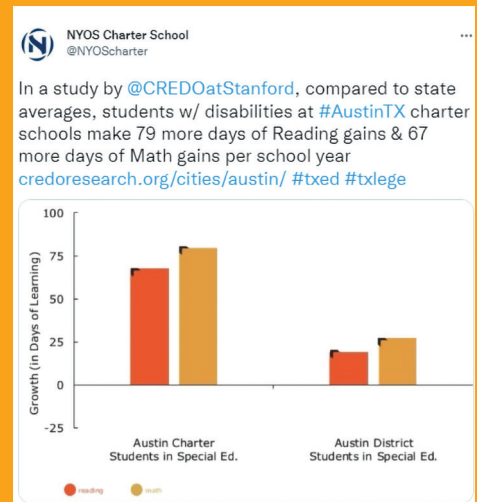
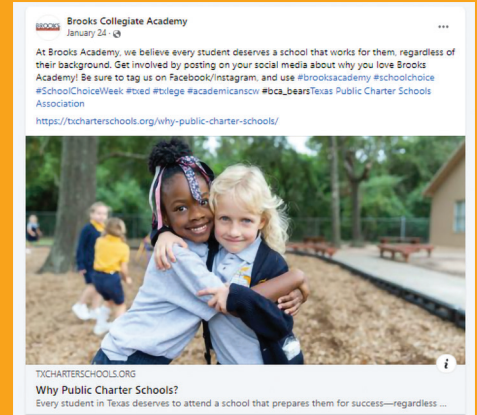
We’re refining a set of proven (yet succinct) key messages that the whole charter school community can use in concert — which will be especially critical during the upcoming legislative session.

### Tools and Resources

We know our member schools are exceptionally busy. So the Association provided the tools they needed to quickly and easily publish great content that connects their own stories to the broader success of the public charter school community.

TPCSA created a comprehensive communications and advocacy toolkit for members, three versatile communications toolkits for sharing new research, and dozens of social media and email newsletter templates.

## Charter schools and advocates spread the word on social media



## STRATEGIC SOCIAL MEDIA

Lawmakers and other Texas influencers increasingly turn to social media to gauge public sentiment and decide what issues to prioritize. We make sure that when they do, the voices of our community register loud and clear.

TPCSA led **15 strategic campaigns** on social media to marshal our supporters, promote key facts, and tell lively success stories. We coordinated with our members to create a sustained and unified drumbeat of content. And this year, we expanded our use of geo-targeting in order to further personalize the messages.

Among the highlights:

- When TPCSA released research showing the state's lowest-income families are thriving at charter schools, the accompanying social media campaign was our most sophisticated yet. Our region-specific content was viewed **336,000** times by **65,000 residents** of Harris, Travis, Dallas, Tarrant, and Bexar counties.
- During Black History Month, our celebration of #BlackExcellence at charter schools included a one-pager about student outcomes that was downloaded 450 times and content (such as video interviews with school leaders) that **reached 26,000 Texans**.
- We took some of our most important messages straight to lawmakers, legislative staff, and state agency employees by "geo-fencing" social media posts in the immediate vicinity of the Capitol in Austin. More than 1,000 influencers saw **16,300 posts** that busted myths, explained research, and put the attention on students.
- During our Texas Charter Schools Week campaign, **House Speaker Dade Phelan** tweeted in support of charter schools — one of legislative leadership's boldest public statements of support to date.

Our strategic use of social media has helped create a well-informed, ready-to-activate online community. Texas charter school supporters took more than **1,600** organic actions this year — engaging with and sharing our content — an **increase of more than 25%** compared to the legislative session in 2020.





## BREAKING THROUGH WITH NEW AUDIENCES

Some audiences are strategically important, but hard to reach — and that challenge isn't unique to Texas. In 2022, TPCSA piloted comprehensive campaigns aimed at informing and persuading two such audiences. We're making valuable contributions to "communications R&D" for the sector both at home and in other states.

### *Houston Think Big*

It's difficult to capture the attention of voters under 40, especially when they live in a major media market. TPCSA's "Houston Think Big" campaign was a sophisticated effort to move the needle.

We conducted message testing among those voters in Harris County and then deployed those messages during six months of sustained communications, including direct mail, text messages, online video ads, Facebook ads, and a tele-townhall. Online, the ads were viewed about **2.6 million times**.

### *If You Believe*

Many white progressive voters don't know what charter schools are — or why they exist. Others are particularly inclined to believe misinformation.

So in partnership with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, TPCSA tested a digital advertising campaign in Austin for two months. The goals: refute myths about charter schools and demonstrate that we have something in common with this audience: a belief in educational fairness for students of color.

The ads generated more than **one million impressions** across Hulu, Spotify, Facebook, and Google Ads.

Paid for by Texas Public  
Charter Schools Association  
3005 S. Lamar Blvd., Ste D-447  
Austin, TX 78704

HOUSTON'S CHARTER  
SCHOOLS ARE  
**FREE & OPEN TO  
ALL STUDENTS—  
NO MATTER WHAT.**

HOUSTON'S public charter schools empower teachers, parents and students.

**RED TAPE** **EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM**

Charter Schools Association  
3005 S. Lamar Blvd.  
Suite D-447  
Austin, TX 78704

PAID FOR BY TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION  
ISSUE MAIL

Preparing Students for Success in the Workforce — **Now that's a Bright Idea!**

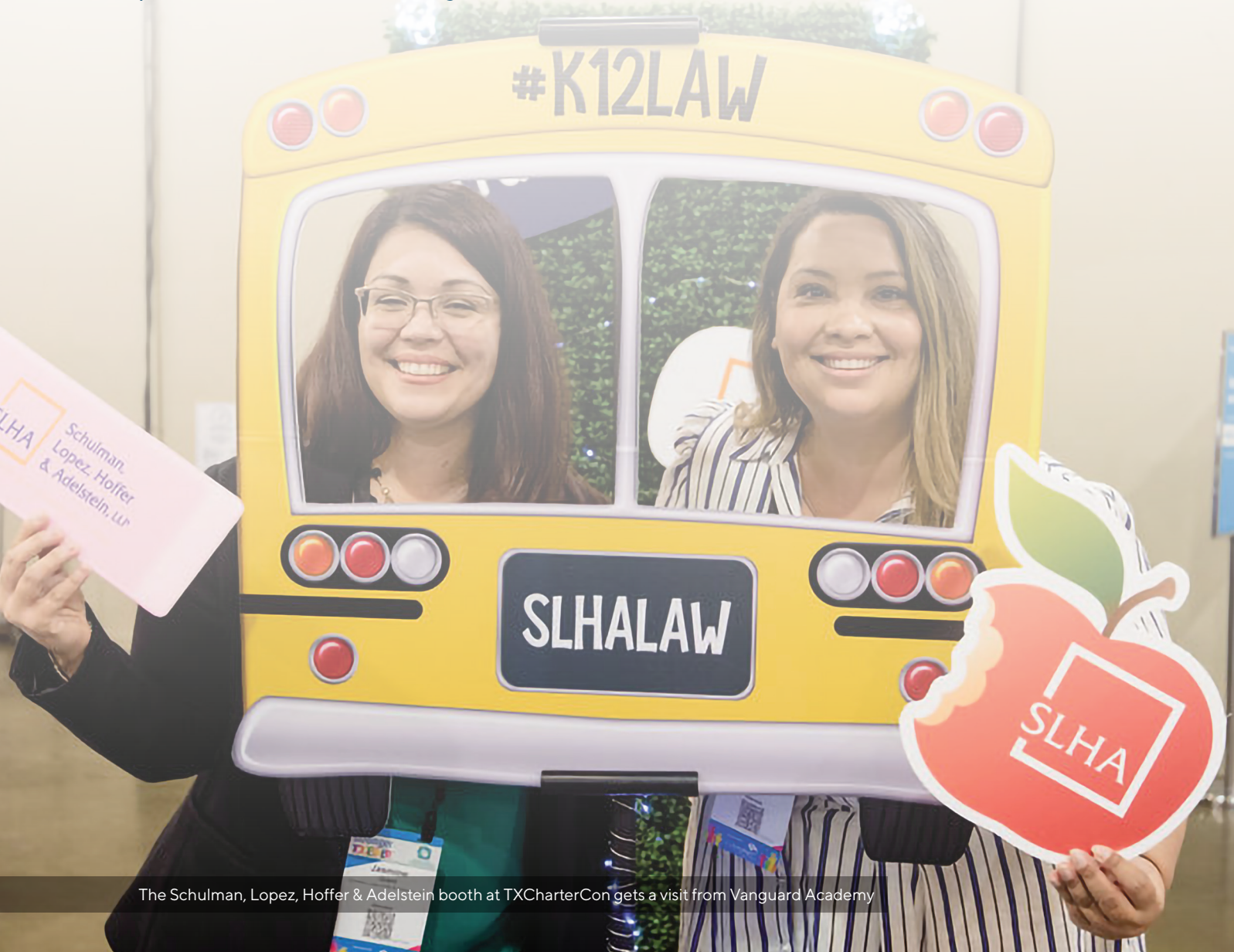
HOUSTON'S public charter schools are preparing the workforce of the future.

PAID FOR BY TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION  
ISSUE MAIL

# RESPONSIVE MEMBER SUPPORT

As any leader in education can tell you, running high-quality schools is no small feat. It takes deep dedication, boundless energy, and a relentless focus on the little things.

The TPCSA team brings those same qualities to the work of supporting our members. This year, we created opportunities for educators to reflect and collaborate, expanded our best-in-class training resources, and continually provided proactive and real-time guidance.



The Schulman, Lopez, Hoffer & Adelstein booth at TXCharterCon gets a visit from Vanguard Academy



Leaders from Two Dimensions Preparatory Academy at the Silver Soiree



Lawmaker roundtable with (from left) Rep. Dan Huberty, Rep. Harold Dutton, and SBOE Member Tom Maynard



Leaders from Great Hearts Texas and Compass Rose Public Schools discuss advocacy



TPCSA honors Teacher Advocate of the Year Judy Moore (left)

## What Attendees Said About the 2021 Texas Charter Schools Conference

“There was a wealth of knowledge and resources available for newly established charters... The range of experience and hearing from/speaking to different individuals left me feeling very empowered!”

“Revisiting the value of diversity, acceptance, and inclusion into not only the educational environment but also our personal lives made this session remarkable.”

“This was one of the best sessions I have attended. I am a grandmother raising my great granddaughter and the challenges of raising a child in this day and age are sometimes overwhelming... The information was very enlightening and educational not only for teachers, but for parents also. I plan to use some of the visual resources to be a better grandparent.”

“This session was invigorating. I love that this approach uses data specific to the population we serve to connect in ways that are relevant and meaningful.”

## 2021 TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOLS CONFERENCE: STRONGER TOGETHER

Every year, TPCSA convenes the largest gathering in Texas for charter school leaders, educators, and supporters. And we raised the bar in 2021.

For the first time, we hosted a hybrid conference. The virtual experience was a marquee event in and of itself — 59 total training sessions on diverse topics including 13 live, fully-interactive classes led by expert instructors.

But the in-person gathering in Dallas stole the show:

Keynote speaker Dr. Nadia Lopez — a former charter school principal and nationally-recognized mental health advocate — shared her very personal insights into how educators can look out for their well-being.

Commissioner of Education Mike Morath reinforced the importance of attendees using their freedom and flexibility at charter schools to step up for students — especially at a time when families need them most.

The 25th Anniversary “Silver Soiree” feted the Generation 1 schools that laid the groundwork for our community today when they opened in 1996.

Breakout sessions were more interactive and collaborative than ever before, including an advocacy breakfast that united schools with their regional peers.

## ADVOCATES OF THE YEAR

TPCSA proudly honored its 2021 Advocates of the Year at the conference. These leaders are incredible ambassadors for the community in the Capitol and beyond.



PARENT  
ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR  
**Gregory Harrington**  
*Harmony  
Science Academy*

**Gregory Harrington** is a champion for the diverse needs of schools and families in Central Texas. He serves on the advisory board for Harmony Science Academy, a public charter school district, as well as the Strategic Planning Committee of Pflugerville ISD. His daughter Madison attends Harmony School of Science in Austin.

He regularly meets with lawmakers on behalf of Central Texas parents and has testified before the House Public Education Committee and the State Board of Education. As a member of the Texas Charter Parent Council, Mr. Harrington motivates his fellow parents to speak out – including by addressing hundreds of attendees at the TPCSA Parent Pep Rally.



TEACHER  
ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR  
**Judy Moore**  
*Austin Achieve  
Public Schools*

**Judy Moore**, a middle school teacher at Austin Achieve Public Schools, isn't just helping the students in her classroom excel. She's also helping other educators get involved in Texas education policy and speak out for their students.

Ms. Moore serves as a coach and mentor to Central Texas fellows in the Teacher Advocacy Leadership Institute. She helped organize a virtual Teacher Rally in 2021, organized a virtual lawmaker meeting for her students, and interviewed with local media.



SCHOOL LEADER  
ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR  
**Dr. Narciso Garcia**  
*Vanguard Academy*

**Dr. Narciso Garcia** is the superintendent of Vanguard Academy Charter Schools, a district whose seven campuses near the US-Mexico border are among the highest-performing in all of Texas.

During the 2021 legislative session, Dr. Garcia successfully spearheaded a bill that gave charter schools access to the Jobs & Education for Texans (JET) grant program, which funds equipment for career and technical education courses.



Left: ILTexas Superintendent Eddie Conger (right) congratulates School Leader Advocate of the Year Dr. Narciso Garcia

Right: Parent Advocate of the Year Gregory Harrington addresses TXCharterCon attendees

## NEW AND ENGAGING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

In 2021, TPCSA expanded its training opportunities for members with the launch of Charter CEntral — an easy-to-use online platform that connects leaders, board members, and school staff to continuing education training webinars and automatically tracks participation.

This year, we continued to build out our training library and refine the platform. And it shows: We added more than 1,000 new users and the number of completed training hours **tripled to more than 17,000**.

**TPCSA offered 51 webinars this year to help member schools not only meet the state’s training requirements, but also empower their communities with new skills and insights. Ninety percent were rated “effective” or “highly effective” by participants.**

The Association makes it easy for Texas public charter school educators to attend high-quality online coursework — live with some of the best trainers in the field. Some examples of new offerings from our catalog:

### **Virtual Institute on New 2023 STAAR Questions and Writing**

In this all-day training institute, teachers and instructional leaders learn about the new and redesigned 2023 STAAR, including new question types, the most-tested standards, and how to use the Tenet Leadership STAAR Writing Rubric.

### **Empower Your School Leadership Team with Achievable Goal Cycles**

Dive into the Driver Diagram framework in this interactive webinar. This framework, designed to organize and operationalize your school’s Continuous Improvement strategies, will assist in achieving quarterly, annual and long-term goal cycles.

### **Creating and Sustaining High-Quality Prekindergarten Programs in Charter Schools**

With increased funding and demand for early learning, many charter schools are considering whether to add Pre-Kindergarten to existing elementary schools. This additional grade level can seem intimidating and often raises the question, “Where do I start?”

## PARTICIPANTS REVIEW TPCSA'S TRAINING

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHARTERS AND ISDS: APPLES  
AND ORANGES OR TWO PEAS IN A POD?

**"The presenter did an excellent job of sharing the differences and similarities of charter schools and ISDs. She was engaging and made grasping how charter schools work enjoyable and easy to understand!"**

*Staff member at Arrow Academy*

BUILDING EFFECTIVE FAMILY-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

**"I liked that we were able to talk about ways in which we should continue to build strong relationships with students and families in order for them to be successful."**

*Administrator from KIPP Texas Public Schools*

VIRTUAL INSTITUTE ON NEW 2023  
STAAR QUESTIONS AND WRITING

**"Timing, delivery, and efficiency were great... This is probably the training I have shared the most in my 6 years because of the opportunities to observe and share."**

*Educator at Triumph Public High School*

MASTERING CHARTER FIRST

**"Huge amount of information given in a very precise manner. Good ideas for monitoring throughout the school year."**

*Board Member at Ki Charter Academy*

INTERSECTION OF TRAUMA, PROLONGED STRESS, AND LEARNING

**"I really appreciated the direct resources that can be implemented immediately in classrooms."**

*Administrator at KIPP Texas Public Schools*

CREATING A CULTURE FOR CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DIVERSITY,  
EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND OTHER ISSUES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

**"The information is relevant to creating a climate of change in the workplace that fosters mutual respect, and the ability for every voice to be heard and matter."**

*Administrator from IDEA Public Schools*

“Like many of our charter school peers, Austin Achieve is providing a high-quality public school education in neighborhoods where the traditional ISD schools aren’t at the level that the community deserves. The vast majority of kids we serve come from low-income backgrounds and will be the first in their families to go to college.

As I see this impact at Austin Achieve, it brings me pride to serve on the TPCSA board of directors as we work together to grow the impact of public charter schools in Texas so that we can provide more public school options in communities that need them the most.”

**JOHN ARMBRUST**

*TPCSA Board Member*



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