



THE Movement REPORT

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at YES Prep

2015-2016



At YES Prep,
we embrace and
protect diversity to
advance equity and
social justice.

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Why Diversity Matters

Nella Garcia Urban, *VP of Talent*

When I moved to Houston in 2003 to attend college, it did not take long for me to understand that I was highly underprepared for the academic rigor of higher education. I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley and attended schools that serve communities very similar to the communities we serve. I did not have access to the same opportunities that my peers did and that struck me in a way that not only perplexed me, but made me frustrated at the systems at play. Once I began learning about the social inequities that faced my community and other communities of color, a fire ignited within me to do whatever I could do to change this very real systemic problem. I found YES Prep, an organization that was

committed to providing opportunities for students from underserved communities, students like me. Becoming a teacher was the best decision I ever made. Looking at my brilliant students every day made me believe that we had a purpose as an organization and also convinced me that little by little, we were going to challenge inequity.

Today, we are facing that inequity daily in the work we do. When our students show the world what they can do and that who they are matters, we prove that identity, community and access has relevance. Our students are on a path to college and given the obstacles they will face along the way, it is our responsibility to guide them in enriching

their understanding of identity and the importance of diversity and equity in our work. Our very mission calls for our students to graduate from college prepared to lead. Part of their preparation is also to understand who they are, the communities they come from, and the importance of understanding each other. While the road to equity and social justice is long, we have talented individuals who will help us all create change together. Diversity matters because when we value difference, we value the very makeup of who we are and what we stand for, equitable access to education for every child in Houston.

a timeline

Spring 2015

Drafting the Diversity Vision Statement

Fall 2015

Diversity sessions launch at all YES Prep sites

Fall 2014

First open dialogue on diversity

Summer 2015

Diversity Ambassador cohort selection

Spring 2016

Successfully completed 4 Affinity Student Summits



Vision

At YES Prep, we embrace and protect diversity to advance equity and social justice.

2015-2016 Strategies

Professional Learning Series for Entire Organization

Inaugural Diversity Ambassadors Cohort

Celebrating Student Identities Through Affinity Summits

Unpacking the Diversity Vision Statement

SYSTEM-WIDE

Professional Development

5

total hours
of PD

1200

staff completed all
3 sessions

60

facilitators

93%

found facilitation to
be highly effective/
effective

84%

rated sessions as
highly effective/
effective

IN THE FUTURE WE WILL CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON
DEVELOPMENT OF FACILITATORS AND HOW TO
ENSURE THAT ALL CONTENT IS RELEVANT AND
ENCOURAGES REFLECTION.

THE IMPACT OF Diversity Ambassadors

The Role

This year, Diversity Ambassadors have been on the front-lines leading our Diversity Initiatives. They have worked tirelessly to move towards systemic implementation of equity at YES Prep. Throughout the year Diversity Ambassadors at the schools and Home Office supported implementation of Diversity Initiatives. They coordinated communication in an effort to further our diversity goals. Each campus community has different needs, and many of the Ambassadors participated in the following activities this year to address those needs:

- Delivered system-level content around diversity and equity
- Supported and identified needs on the campus specifically connected to the diversity vision
- Led dialogue or supported the planning of events to celebrate cultural awareness
- Served as models and ambassadors of our diversity vision and beliefs
- Led diversity weeks or summits at the campus and system level

The Statistics

91% of staff feels that YES Prep values diversity in comparison to 75% in 14-15

of staff feels that YES Prep provides a welcoming environment, given my background and identity in comparison to 79% in 14-15

92%

100% of Diversity Ambassadors feel that “As a Diversity Ambassador this year, I have had the opportunity to learn and grow.”

of Diversity Ambassadors feel that “As a Diversity Ambassador this year, I felt prepared to present the diversity sessions.”

100%

The Impact

In 2015-2016, we launched the Diversity Ambassador Cohort in an effort to increase professional learning around identity, dialogue and bias as well as to support the celebration of culture and heritage, working to embrace and protect diversity in an effort to advance equity and social justice. Based on their feedback and yours, it is easy to see how their work has succeeded in building a foundation for this charge. The impact of their work will be felt for years to come at YES Prep. We can't thank them enough for their passion and hard work to ensure every child at YES has a better chance at life via an excellent education!

SPOTLIGHT ON Diversity Ambassadors

What lessons have you learned this year?

Megan Gibbs, Director of Instruction, East End

"I have learned a lot about myself and my own comfort level with difficult conversations and I find myself having to keep pushing myself and reflecting on how I am or am not living a life that is inclusive. I am proud that we have built a team of teachers/L-team members who lead sessions and create opportunities to celebrate diversity."

Ali Sifflet, Student Support Counselor, West

"I've learned how to listen and really be open to the points and perspectives of others despite my level of agreement...Although I am not an expert, I feel that I have grown in my ability to allow for silence and awkward moments to occur, for in those moments we find growth, healing and understanding."

What are you most proud of in your work this year?

Ashley Dalton, Instructional Coach, Teaching Excellence

"I am most proud of the sessions that Chelsey Freeman and I led at the Home Office. She and I worked really hard to make those sessions great, and I feel like we ended up in a good place. I am excited to think more about how the diversity vision statement connects to our theme of "all means all," especially thinking about the content we put in front of students, our management systems, special learners, and our communities."

Mia Brown, 8th grade ELA, Southeast

"I want to continue to push the initiatives that the diversity ambassadors have established on each campus. I would like to see both our campus and district in a place where these tools and interactions become commonplace for students, parents, and staff. With the continuation of these initiatives, all students that graduate from YES Prep Public Schools will be equipped to celebrate their respective identities while acknowledging the diverse experiences and identities of others."

Why do you feel passionate about this work?

Vanessa Morales, 7th grade Math, Brays Oaks

"Being a part of the first generation of my family to graduate from high school has come with more struggles than expected. I had a great time in school and didn't feel as though I was at a disadvantage until I attended Rice University...In church one time I heard an amazing quote that stuck with me - 'Through our pain, our purpose is birthed.' I truly feel grateful that I underwent through so much hardship in undergrad because that has instilled in me a sense of purpose- to help my students and family members. I desire for my students and family to have the same opportunities that are available to me, as a now, college graduate."

Ron Lynch, 10th grade ELA, North Forest

"I feel passionate about this work, because this work is directly tied to my livelihood. I am doing the work that I wish someone would've done for me as a Black queer boy who hated being Black and the thought of being queer. I guess I am doing this for myself, and the many ways I failed and harmed myself up until and beyond this moment."

Here we see what **compassion** means.

It is **not a bending** toward the underprivileged
from a privileged position;

It is **not a reaching out** from on high to those
who are less fortunate below;

It is **not a gesture** of sympathy or pity for those
who fail to make it in the upward pull.

On the contrary, compassion means **going**
directly to those people and places
where suffering is most acute and building a
home there.

Henri Nouwen

CELEBRATING

Student Identities

Summits Overview

Brotherhood Summit (Fall 2015)

Building Community for our Future

225

attending
students

30

participating
staff

10

guests &
volunteers

Sisterhood Summit (Winter 2015)

Building Community for our Future

250

attending
students

40

participating
staff

15

guests &
volunteers

Latino Leadership Summit (Spring 2016)

Adelante! Leadership Towards Activism

220

attending
students

40

participating
staff

20

guests &
volunteers

Unity Summit (Spring 2016)

Hear Our Cry!

100

attending
students

25

participating
staff

20

guests &
volunteers

Brotherhood Summit



"I learned what it means to be black, to be strong, and to lead."

YES Prep North Forest student, when asked what the Brotherhood Summit meant to him and what it means to lead.

Sisterhood Summit



“The Sisterhood Summit showed me that the black community is amazing and we are all unique, beautiful beings.”

Jinae Miles, North Forest

Latino Leadership Summit



“The Latino Leadership Summit made me realize that my identity will play a large role in college. I must embrace who I am.”

Over Garcia, Brays Oaks

What's Next?

Diversity Movement Summit- Summer 2016

More Dialogue Opportunities

Continuation of Affinity Summits for Students

More Diversity Ambassadors

Onboarding New Staff with Professional Learning Around Identity

Interested in learning more about the Diversity Initiatives work at YES Prep?

Contact us at diversity@yesprep.org.