

Executive Summary of the Final Performance Report
U.S. Department of Education Charter Schools Program Grant for Replication
and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools
(PR/Award #: U282M140017)

INTRODUCTION

YES Prep Public Schools, Inc. (hereafter “YES Prep”) was awarded a five-year, Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant in 2014 to: (1) support the opening of new schools and the grade-level expansion of existing schools; (2) provide for professional and curriculum development, and; (3) afford oversight, management, and evaluation of such expansion and development. The grant was also awarded to increase college attainment rates of educationally disadvantaged students. The original performance period of the grant was October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2019, a period subsequently extended to September 30, 2020 (school year 2019-2020) by an approved “no-cost” extension.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROJECT GOALS AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Goal 1: Increase the number of high-quality charter school seats available to educationally disadvantaged students.

Achievement of expected outcomes and performance measures

- During the original grant period, YES Prep opened one new school, YES Prep Hobby, and expanded five existing project schools -- YES Prep Northbrook High School, YES Prep Southside, YES Prep Eisenhower, YES Prep Northwest, and YES Prep Northline. A seventh school, YES Prep North Central Elementary School (#19), was planned and a “no-cost extension” request was approved by the Department of Education for the period 2019-2020. This latter school was constructed and opened in August 2020. All schools were located in low income, educationally disadvantaged neighborhoods in Houston, Texas.
- Targets for African American/Hispanic student enrollments were exceeded.
- Targets for students with limited English proficiency and with special education needs were exceeded.

Goal 2: Increase the achievement results of educationally disadvantaged students.

Achievement of expected outcomes and performance measures

- Targets of maintaining high student attendance and fall-to-fall student persistence were exceeded at project schools.
- Student performance on state-mandated reading and math tests for 2019-2020 could not be assessed because the STAAR test was not administered due to the State of Texas COVID-19 testing moratorium owing.

Goal 3: Increase the college attainment rates of educationally disadvantaged students.

Achievement of expected outcomes and performance measures

- Average SAT score for project schools (Northbrook and Eisenhower) was 987 for the senior class of 2020. According to the Prep Scholar Web site, the 2020 statewide average for Texas was 1010. However, ethnicity was reportedly an important factor in predicting SAT scores. The 2020 nationwide average for African American students was 927 while the average for Hispanic/Latino students was 969. It is likely that, considering the ethnicity of YES Prep students at the two project schools, these YES Prep schools scored above average.
- The percentage of graduating seniors accepted to college was 94%, only slightly below the 100% target.
- Nationally and at YES Prep, matriculation fell dramatically in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect this percentage to increase with spring matriculation in 2021 for the class of 2020.
- According to the State of Texas Education Agency 2019-2020 academic performance reports, YES Prep *exceeded* statewide percentages on *all* measures of “post-secondary readiness,” a measure that included actual enrollments in Texas institutions of higher education.

Goal 4: Increase the number of highly-qualified and highly-trained teachers.

Achievement of expected outcomes and performance measures

- All performance targets for this goal were *exceeded*, including actual teacher retention and teacher surveys about the recognition they received, opportunities for growth, and encouragement of professional development.

Goal 5: Increase parent and community engagement.

Achievement of expected outcomes and performance measures

- Performance targets for parents attending a YES Prep event and for schools engaging community organizations were *exceeded* considerably.
- Parent survey questions in 2019-2020 centered on COVID-19 and resulting problems; a survey question in that school year was not asked about the targeted measure of parents’ information levels. In 2018-2019 only three schools – Southside, Northline, and Northwest, were open in time to collect information from parents about this question.

PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, PRACTICE, AND/OR POLICY

The research contributions of the project include finding evidence in support of the YES Prep College Initiative Model (p. 36 in the original application). The model is based on interventions

tested earlier by Hoxby and Turner to enhance college/university matriculation and college/university graduation rates among educationally disadvantaged students.

Additionally, an important matter of knowledge acquisition involved the lessons learned about cross-state charter school expansion. These lessons included the many hurdles involved in cross-state growth such as: (1) barriers posed by variations in community acceptance and state laws, (2) differing financial accountability requirements, (3) stresses on school support systems, and (4) the need for “on the ground leadership.”

The project contributed to practice by encouraging teachers and instructional coaches to work together on lesson plans, on classroom culture, and on being education professionals. This involved instructional coaching for every new teacher by an instructional coach as well as “professional learning Saturdays.” They also received professional learning modules in a collaborative environment which focus on content pedagogy and the cultural, instructional needs of teachers.

Finally, the project reinforced the need for a policy that stresses the importance of adopting opportunities for minority student learning success and of promoting racial and ethnic diversity among students, families and instructional staff (See Section C of this report).

POPULATION SERVED

This CSP grant was invaluable in increasing our capacity to target, heavily recruit, and serve educationally disadvantaged students: 85% were economically disadvantaged, 30% were “Limited English Proficient,” 8% received special education services, and 98% were Hispanic or African American (often underserved populations). We are extremely grateful for the U.S. Department of Education support that enabled our district to replicate and expand our efforts and dramatically change the achievement outcomes for historically underserved and underperforming student subgroups in Houston.