

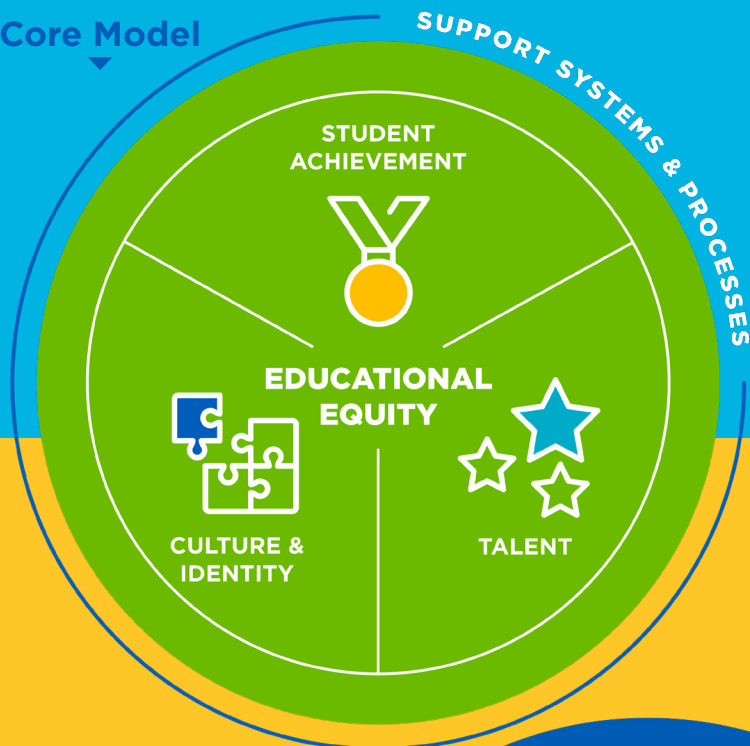


# LEADING HOUSTON FORWARD

2020-2021 YES Prep Annual Report

## Core Model

SUPPORT SYSTEMS & PROCESSES



## Mission

YES Prep Public Schools will increase the number of students from underserved communities who graduate from college prepared to lead.

## Vision

Every child in Houston will have equitable access to a public school that delivers an excellent, college-ready education.

## Core Values



## Strategic Priorities

### EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

We will ensure that every child in Houston has greater access to a rigorous YES Prep pre-K through 12th grade education.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

We will ensure that in every school, in every classroom, every day, all students engage in rigorous, aligned, and active learning, dramatically increasing their college readiness.

### CULTURE & IDENTITY

We will embrace the diverse communities, cultures, identities, and abilities of all students to help them succeed in college and lead choice-filled lives.

### TALENT

We will continue to attract diverse, extraordinary talent at every level and will purposefully increase inclusivity, retention, and development of our teammates.

### SUPPORT SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

We will make optimal use of available systems and data and share innovative best practices to significantly increase agility, productivity, and sustainability.



# Dear Friends and Supporters,

The 2020-2021 school year was a tremendous challenge for every student, teacher, staff member, and community member of YES Prep Public Schools, and we are so proud of how we prioritized the safety of our community while continuing to provide a quality education to our students. This report will highlight some of our successes and preview how we plan to motivate our students to overcome the challenges of the last 18 months through a network of learning recovery efforts.

## FIRST, LET'S CELEBRATE OUR SUCCESSES

**SAFEST YEAR EVER.** Not one YES Prep student or staff member was lost due to the pandemic. Our schools were the safest they've ever been.

**TWO NEW, HIGH-ACHIEVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.** We launched our first two elementary schools and constructed our third and fourth elementary schools. We are so proud of our new campuses and the strength of our student achievement in such an abnormal year.

**DEVICES AND MEALS DELIVERED TO OUR STUDENTS.** We set up and distributed over 10,000 student laptops and provided internet access to over 2,200 families to ensure every YES Prep student had the necessary tools to continue to learn. We also served over 750,000 meals in person and delivered over 1.5 million meals to student homes during a year of increased food insecurity in our community.

**FOCUS ON TEACHERS.** We won the Teacher Incentive Allotment, which provided over \$942,000 directly to our teachers for student achievement results. We also launched an internal vaccination program, ensuring that more than 70% of our teammates are fully vaccinated heading into the new school year.



**MARK DIBELLA**  
CEO

**AWARD-WINNING SCHOOL SYSTEM.** All 10 eligible high schools were ranked in the top 10% of schools nationally and statewide according to the U.S. News & World Report.

## AND, HOW WILL WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS TO OVERCOME THE LEARNING GAPS CREATED BY THE LAST 18 MONTHS?

**BY BEING FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE.** This year, everyone at YES Prep had to be adaptable, constantly flexing and adjusting in response to ever-changing policies designed to contain COVID-19's devastating spread.

**BY LEARNING.** These challenges taught us to think more creatively about how we work, how to be better problem-solvers, and how to find new ways to keep our students learning and thriving.

**BY KEEPING YES PREP'S MISSION AS OUR COMPASS.** Maintaining a healthy and safe environment, we will stay intently focused on what is best for our students, their families, and each other.

## WE ARE IMMENSELY GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR EMBRACING OUR MISSION.

No matter what else is happening in the world around us, YES Prep will keep doing what we do: working hard every day to eliminate educational inequities and to equip our students for success in college and in life thanks to you.



**MELANIE TRENT**  
BOARD CHAIR



# Equity Reignited

There has been a growing awakening during the past year to the racial injustice that exists in our country. Because of our commitment to the students and families we serve, we never turn a blind eye to the injustices they face. With “eliminating educational inequity to advance social justice” as a core value, YES Prep remains ever committed to becoming an increasingly antiracist organization. Equity work is actively happening at all levels of YES Prep. Last summer, the Board of Directors signed a resolution that YES Prep will denounce racism and white supremacy in our schools, treat all students equitably by celebrating and protecting their unique identities, and amplify Black voices and perspectives. The resolution also recognized that there is much work ahead.

An Equity Reignited Working Group has been helping guide our equity work across the system, identifying areas needing attention, prioritizing tasks, and establishing metrics to measure results. We are committed to preparing students for the challenges ahead, both academically and socially.

## Student Affinity Summits

With the help of creativity, technology, and COVID-19 safety precautions, Student Affinity Summits were able to take place this year, helping students to develop pride in their identities and build relationships with the communities with which they identify. This year, YES Prep hosted the Brotherhood and Sisterhood, LatinX Leadership, Pride Plus, and APIA (Asian, Pacific Islander American) Summits.

YES Prep believes that these efforts will strengthen students' support systems and build their self-confidence, increasing the likelihood of their success in college and beyond.

**Preparing our  
students for  
a just world**



# Making College a Reality

When Donye started at YES Prep Northside Secondary in 6th grade, he said, “I promised my mom that I was going to go to college. A lot of people in my family have never been to college.” Though the pandemic started during a critical time in Donye’s high school journey, it never changed his outlook on achieving his dream. Donye wished to choose his own future path. He wanted to graduate from high school and go on to earn a college degree.

**OVER 90% OF OUR STUDENTS ARE THE FIRST GENERATION IN THEIR FAMILIES TO ATTEND COLLEGE. THEY ARE EAGER TO BE THE DIFFERENCE.**

With our College Initiatives program at YES Prep, college counselors prepare seniors for graduation by guiding students and their families through the complicated process of applying for and enrolling in college. Thankfully, our College Initiatives team is right there to create pathways to opportunity for students to help them achieve their professional and personal goals.

Our college counselor to student ratio is

**40:1**

compared to the national average of 471:1.

YES Prep students receive

**12x**

the individualized college counseling support.



**Thanks to your support of college-ready programming, Donye (pictured left) is now a class of 2021 graduate of YES Prep Northside Secondary and will begin his first semester at the University of Texas at Austin this fall. We know that Donye has a bright future ahead of him.**

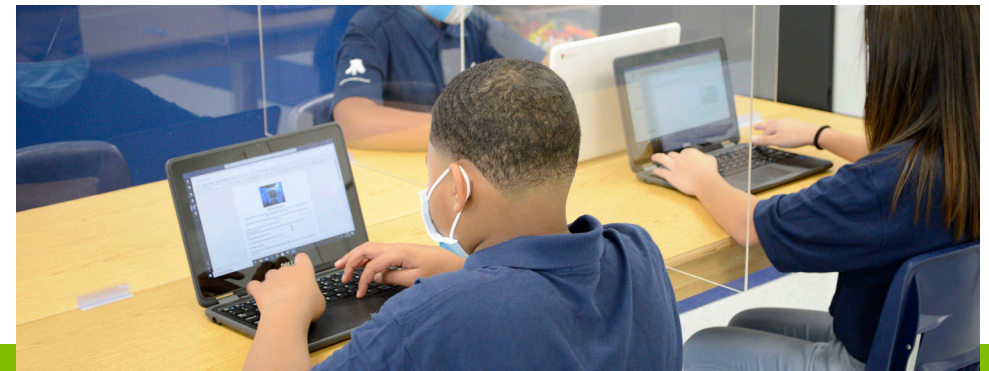


# Overcoming the Impact of COVID-19

By now, it is widely known that COVID-19 disproportionately impacts communities of color and those with limited financial resources. YES Prep is witnessing this firsthand.

Education experts estimate that students in the U.S. have lost at least a full year of learning, on average, during the pandemic, and the losses are even greater for economically disadvantaged students of color. Their college matriculation rates have dropped too, creating long-term ramifications for educational options and earning potential.

To put it simply, the pandemic has already caused extraordinary challenges for our students now and will continue to challenge many of them in the years ahead.



**YES Prep is meeting the challenges of the pandemic head-on and staying true to our commitment to providing the high-quality public education that all children deserve.**



**Here are just a few of our strategies to keeping students on the college path:**

### **GET BACK ON TRACK**

Technology will be a cornerstone in our learning model going forward. We're expanding the 2021-2022 academic calendar to provide more instructional minutes and a longer school day. We will continue to use the accelerated learning strategies we'd honed before the pandemic to get our students back on track.

### **GROW TO SERVE MORE STUDENTS**

We know that equipping early learners is the key to long-term academic success. Two more YES Prep elementary schools will open in the 2021-2022 school year and we will triple our impact by adding our first pre-K and third grade classes.

### **INCREASE COLLEGE MATRICULATION RATES**

Seeing a double-digit drop in the percentage of students advancing to college is scary. To boost college matriculation rates and help more students start college as planned and graduate with a degree, we are expanding our College Initiatives Team to deliver intensive, individualized support for secondary students.

### **ENSURE OUR STUDENTS HAVE GREAT TEACHERS**

Knowing that the competition for high-quality teachers will remain intense (a major challenge across the country), YES Prep will continue to recruit teachers early, offer competitive salaries, equip new teachers with excellent training through our nationally recognized Teaching Excellence certification program, and do everything we can to be a great place for teachers to work and thrive.



# Supporting the Whole Student



**CECILIA MENDOZA**  
YES Prep East End Secondary

Our students face unimaginable challenges both in and outside of the classroom. Thanks to our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming, our Student Support Counselors (SSCs) work hand-in-hand with students and families to ensure all students are receiving the social, emotional, and mental health support they need.

Through SEL, students are developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for life success. At YES Prep, we commit to transformative SEL, which provides a foundation for positive, long-term effects on our students and their communities.

Because of your support this past year, our secondary campuses were able to create safe spaces for emotional awareness. With their homeroom teachers, students gathered once a week to discuss topics such as self-management, decision making, and mental health and wellness. For our elementary students, among other things, we provided resources for the whole family to practice SEL skills at home.

Thank you! Your generosity this year helps us implement programming that serves the whole child and prepares them to face the world with confidence.

**I believe that at YES Prep my job as a SSC impacts the student holistically. We work with the student, family, and campus to best support the student's mental, physical, and emotional health. When you see the student from middle school all the way through their senior year, you see the impact, and there are no words to describe that feeling."**



# Beyond the Classroom

YES Prep provides robust enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom, and this year was no different, even with COVID-19 modifications to ensure the health and safety of students. Through the Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program, students end their school day with a variety of activities, including chess, theater, robotics, dance, and homework assistance. With on-campus clubs, like Student Council and National Honor Society, we are proudly able to recognize student leaders and high achievers.

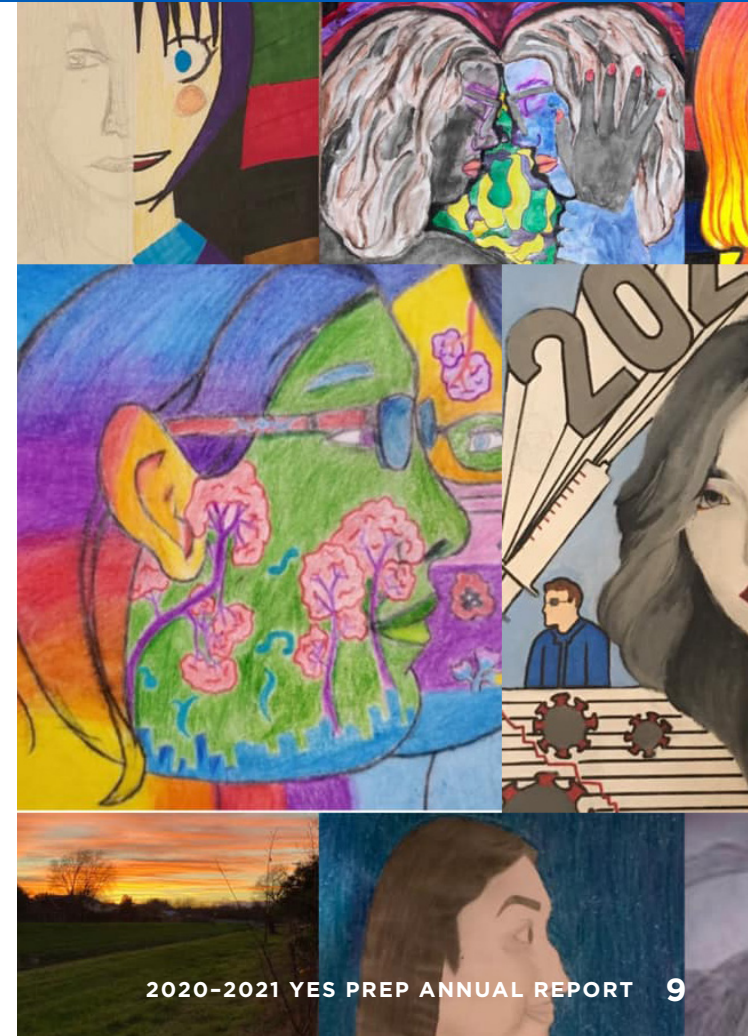


## We've Got Talent!

YES Prep is proud to offer budding artists of all ages exciting opportunities to learn new skills. Our youngest learners at YES Prep Southeast Elementary competed in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Art competition for the first time this year.

"We worked really hard, and every single student submitted a work of art to the contest," said Ms. Bryant. "Many of the students had not participated in the contest before, and this was their first year."

The Houston Rodeo Art Competition is a famed event featuring art from students all over Houston. Led by veteran art teacher Colleen Bryant, second-grade artist Isaac Peña was chosen as one of the coveted Best in Show winners with kindergarten student Valeria Ramon-Ballona winning a Gold Medal!



# Leading Houston Forward Together

The start of each school year marks an exciting new chapter for YES Prep and those we serve, and the 2020-2021 year was especially exciting as we opened our very first elementary schools, YES Prep North Central Elementary and YES Prep Southeast Elementary.

When YES Prep opened its doors 23 years ago, it did not originally have the capacity to serve all children. Now, YES Prep is a national leader in serving all children, including those with profound special needs and those who require intense interventions. To achieve our mission, we are committed to providing our children with a YES Prep pre-K through 12th grade education.

In August 2021, we will open our next two elementary schools, YES Prep North Forest Elementary and YES Prep Southside Elementary. We will also offer full-day monolingual and bilingual pre-K at all four elementary schools. YES Prep is one of the few open public charter school systems in Houston to offer a bilingual elementary program providing a strong start so children can become the best learners they can be. This would not be possible without your generosity and your partnership in the work that we do.

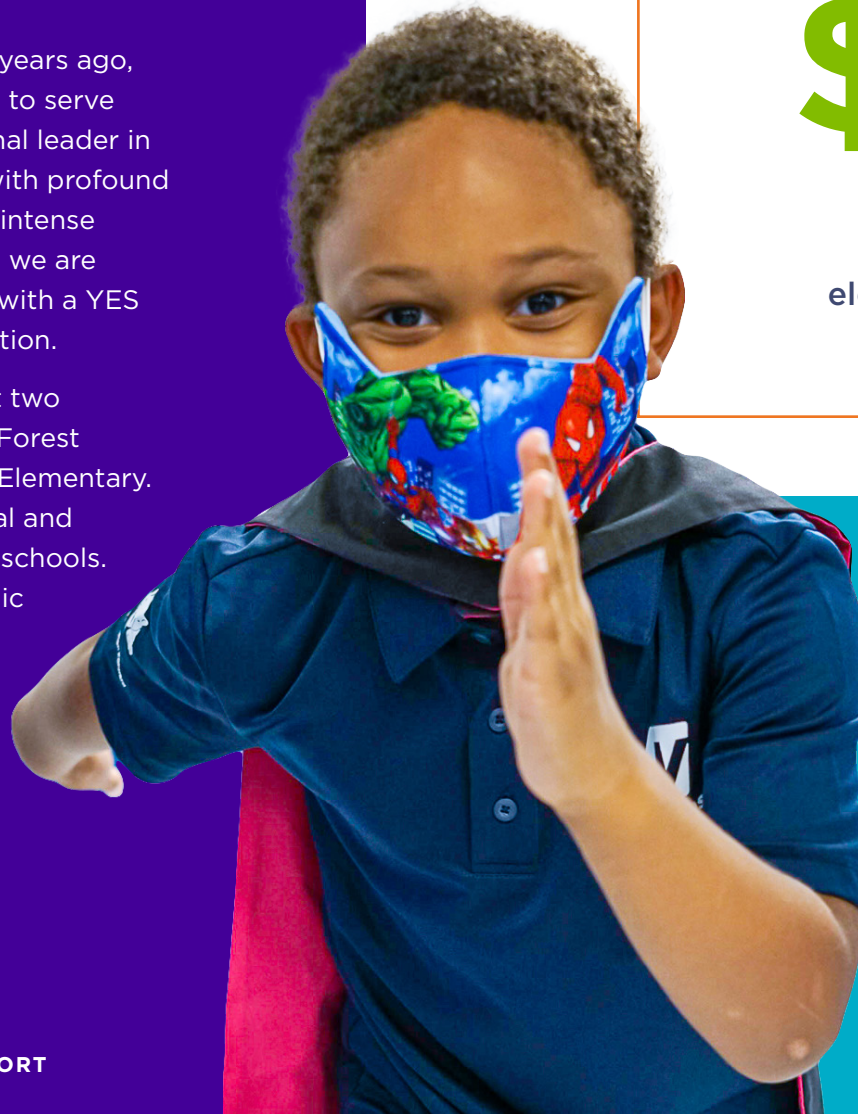
To date, YES Prep has raised

# \$65.6M

towards its ambitious

# \$80M

Leading Houston Forward campaign goal to open 10 elementary schools and serve 22,000 students by 2024.



**Thanks to your enduring support, YES Prep will continue to provide communities in Houston access to the excellent, college-ready education that they deserve.**



# YES Prep Student Becomes YES Prep Teacher

Students come to YES Prep from many different backgrounds and schools, and it can be a challenge to align their YES Prep paths and serve them equitably. Who better to understand their journey than a YES Prep teacher who once walked the halls as a YES Prep student.

Wendy Rangel has completed her first year as kindergarten teacher at YES Prep Southeast Elementary. But she remembers when her journey at YES Prep first began.



**WENDY RANGEL**  
Kindergarten Teacher  
YES Prep Southeast Elementary

Wendy struggled to adjust initially, but quickly got used to the higher expectations and went on to graduate from high school and college.

“The level of rigor I was used to at YES Prep prepared me for the workload in college. I had amazing college counselors who answered every question I could possibly have to prepare me to pursue my dream of going to college in California.”

Wendy earned a dual-degree Masters in Art and Teaching at The University of San Francisco. Then she brought her talents and passion for teaching young learners back to Houston to eventually fulfill the role of kindergarten teacher at YES Prep Southeast Elementary.

“Kindergarten is a foundational grade for a lot of students and one that can be the most memorable. I am honored and privileged to be part of their educational career very early in their life and to champion for them and their dreams,” said Wendy.

**THANK YOU WENDY, AND ALL OF OUR TEACHERS, FOR YOUR PASSIONATE WORK IN CREATING PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR STUDENTS.**

**I remember hearing about YES Prep when I was in fifth grade. My parents were not satisfied with the middle school I was zoned to and were looking for an alternative option for me. I had a few family members and friends who enrolled at YES Prep and were happy with the school and level of rigor, so we checked it out for ourselves.”**

# Special Events

The Leading Houston Forward Celebration and the YES Prep Oil & Gas Texas Hold Em' Poker Tournament bring together some of our most loyal and impactful donors and friends, while raising large sums to support our students and their success. The YES Prep community rallied in these virtual settings to raise jaw-dropping amounts for students on the path to college.

# Leading Houston Forward Celebration 2020

**WE RAISED OVER \$780,000 AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL LEADING HOUSTON FORWARD (VIRTUAL) CELEBRATION ON OCTOBER 28, 2020.**

Chaired by Meredith and Ben Marshall, almost 300 guests tuned in to support YES Prep.

Guests enjoyed a captivating keynote address from Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, America's leading scholar on anti-racism and author of the best-selling book, *How to Be an Antiracist*. The Chris Barbic Legacy Award was presented to longtime and loyal YES Prep supporters, Debra and Mark Gregg, for their tireless commitment to YES Prep's mission.



## Poker Tournament

On March 4, 2021, YES Prep and Houston's leaders in the oil and gas industry and philanthropic community hosted the **16<sup>th</sup> Annual YES Prep Oil & Gas Texas Hold 'Em Tournament** in a new virtual setting. Companies and poker enthusiasts from around the country sponsored tables of players who enjoyed a night of fast-paced online poker. The action on the computer screen was no less exciting at the finish, wrapping up a night totaling \$1.1 million raised to support YES Prep's 21 campuses across Houston. The tournament winner, Casey Kahn of Vitol, won in the final round, closing out the highly successful virtual game.



# \$1.1M

raised to support YES Prep's  
21 campuses across Houston



# Advisory Council

Inventiveness and flexibility were the name of the game this past year, and YES Prep's Advisory Council was no exception to the rule. The Advisory Council represents dedicated donors who are passionate about the organization's mission.

Advisory Council members meet quarterly to foster dialogue and to learn about topics related to YES Prep and the education reform landscape both locally and nationally.

Like so many events this year, quarterly meetings moved to a virtual setting, offering exciting opportunities to engage with national speakers. To kick-off the school year, Sal Khan, Founder and CEO of Khan Academy, was featured in a lively discussion around the new reality of remote learning.

Just as the 87th Texas Legislative Session was about to start, Starlee Coleman, Executive Director of Texas Public Charter Schools Association, joined us from Austin to share the most important issues facing charter schools and how to engage in advocacy efforts.

The school year was capped off by a riveting conversation with Arne Duncan, Founder and Executive Director of Chicago CRED and Former U.S. Secretary of Education. Centering on the topic of racial equity in education, Arne was honest and insightful, offering ways to invest in our students as we tackle the challenges ahead.

**Looking forward, YES Prep hopes to combine the best of both in-person and virtual meetings. By spreading awareness of and advocating for YES Prep's mission, the Advisory Council will build on an enduring legacy of philanthropy.**



# Legislative **WINS** for Charter Schools

During the 87th Texas Legislative Session, YES Prep engaged like never before! YES Prep was in continual contact with Houston-area lawmakers to ensure that the needs of our students and families were well represented. We mobilized our community to tell YES Prep's story—and when our voices are heard, it makes a difference. Here are just a few of the wins:



## **PUBLIC EDUCATION FULLY FUNDED**

During session in which lawmakers had every excuse to cut funding for public schools, Texas legislators stuck to their word. Public schools, including public charter schools, were fully funded for the biennium.



## **CHARTER ACCESS TO STATE GRANTS**

With the passing of Senate Bill 346, public charter schools gained access to the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant program, which provides funding for public schools to purchase equipment for use in career and technical education classes.



## **PROPERTY TAX PARITY FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Before House Bill 3610 passed, public charter schools had to use state-allocated funds (an estimated \$12 million in total) to pay local property taxes on leased school buildings, even though ISDs and private schools are exempt from these taxes.



## **A GOOD DEFENSE**

Sometimes the bills that don't pass are just as important as those that do. With the help of the advocacy efforts of our statewide charter community, no anti-charter bills passed this session.

A huge thank you to the parents, students, teachers, Board members, Advisory Council, and community stakeholders who engaged with us this session. It was a great session for Texas public charter schools.






# YES Prep Offers Bilingual Instruction at pre-K!

At YES Prep, we believe that All Means ALL and that means working tirelessly to serve all students, no matter their first language. Early exposure to a bilingual program for our English language learners eliminates language barriers while giving students academic and social advantages. Bilingual education develops important cognitive skills, such as problem solving, logic, critical thinking, and creativity.

Bilingual program instruction is a sliding scale with English instruction increasing by each grade. By 5th grade, instruction will be 100% in English. At YES Prep, roughly one of two pre-K classrooms and two of five K-5 classrooms will offer the bilingual program, and the majority of elementary staff are bilingual.

Recruiting excellent bilingual teachers is a top priority as they are in high demand at a local, state, and national level. To ensure their long-term success in the classroom, in addition to year-long training through our Teaching Excellence program, Curriculum Camps are held for founding elementary teachers prior to the start of school to accelerate learning about our elementary academic program.

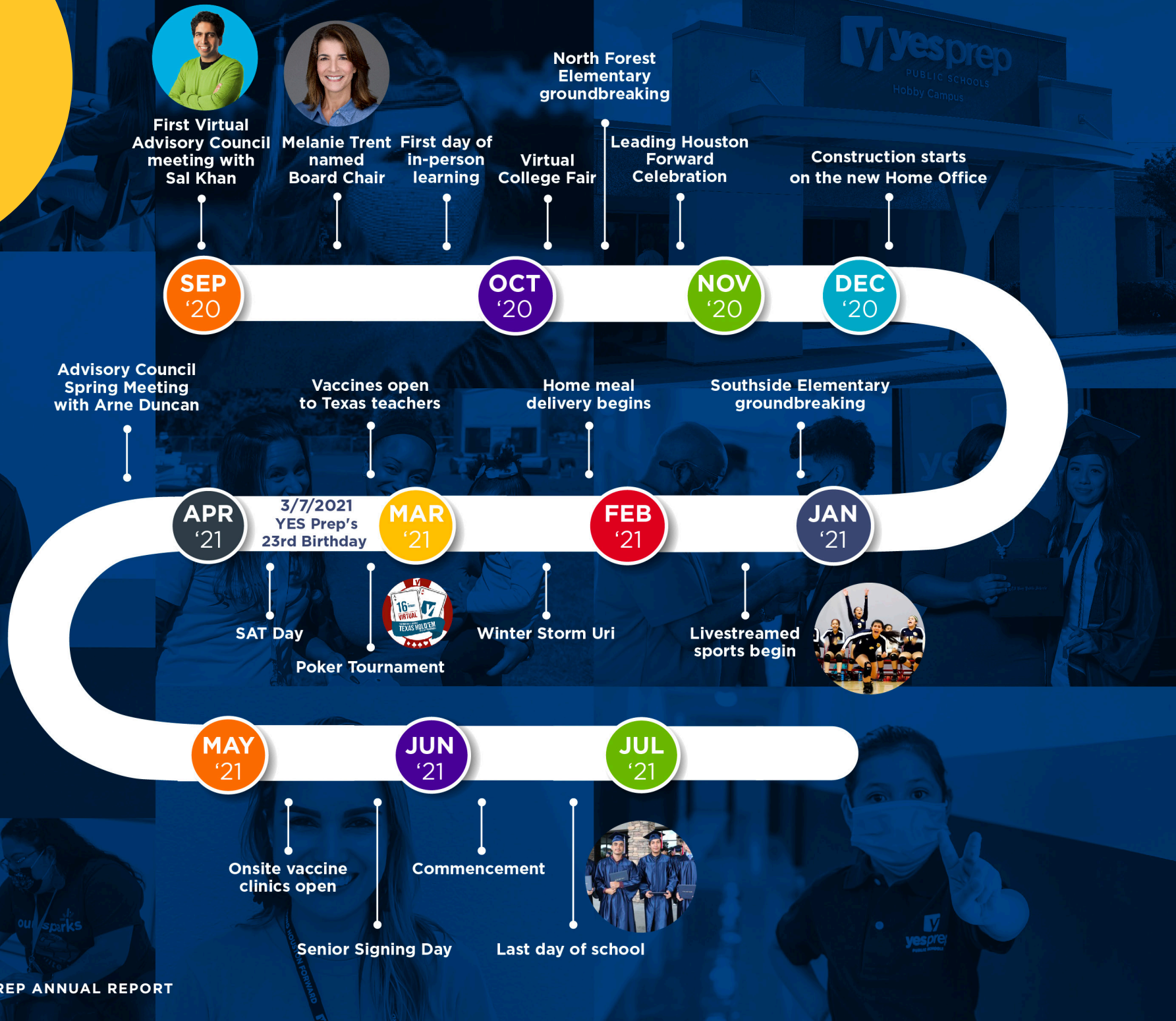
YES Prep has implemented a comprehensive Spanish Language Arts (SLA) curriculum that is an equity-driven solution for students to read, write, and communicate in Spanish. In addition, our elementary schools are small and intentionally structured to allow staff to build transformative student relationships as they remain on track for 3rd grade reading proficiency, a powerful predictor of long-term educational success.



**“As the son of immigrants and having grown up on the Texas-Mexico border, I know the deep impact that a bilingual teacher can have with our students as they navigate both the academic and social aspects of their lives. We can unlock a wealth of opportunities for our students by having an effective teacher in every classroom. To do that we must have a strong strategy around total rewards, partnerships for pipelines of talent, and positioning YES Prep as an employer of choice.”**

**TONY MUÑOZ**  
Chief Talent Officer

# Year in Review





## Board of Directors

**Melanie Trent**, Chair  
**Eric Calderon**, Vice-Chair  
**Mickey Barrett**  
**Tom Castro**  
**Mark Gregg**, Chair Emeritus  
**Denise Hester**  
**Ben Marshall**  
**Jordan Marye**  
**Rev. Leslie Smith**  
**Ann Davis Vaughan**

### SPECIAL ADVISORS TO THE BOARD

**Luly Castillo**  
**Eric Chan**  
**Luis Elizondo-Thomson**

## Advisory Council

**Janet Clark**, Chair  
**Julie and Drew Alexander**  
**John Arnold**  
**Karen Arnold**  
**Morgan and Chris Brown**  
**Andy Drake**  
**Barbara and Michael Gamson**  
**Claire and Joe Greenberg**  
**Lori and Chip Johnson**  
**Dr. Sippi and Ajay Khurana**  
**Carla Knobloch**  
**Linda and Carl Kuhnen**  
**Ryan McCord**  
**Elizabeth and Greer Pagan**  
**Tami and Lee Pearson**

**Doug Perley**  
**Judy Rolke**  
**Cathryn and Doug Selman**  
**Eliza and Stuart Stedman**  
**Dr. Ann Ziker**

## C-Suite

**Mark DiBella**, Chief Executive Officer  
**Carmen Darville**, Chief of Staff  
**Luis Mena**, Chief Financial Officer  
**Tony Muñoz**, Chief Talent Officer  
**Naveen Pinglay**, Chief Operating Officer  
**Robin Susman**, Chief Advancement Officer  
**Nella García Urban**, Chief Program Officer  
**Philip Wright**, Chief Schools Officer





5455 South Loop East, Houston, TX 77033

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