

East Grand Preparatory
A Cityscape Schools, Inc. School

Pre-Kindergarten
Family Engagement
Action Plan

2016-2017

Introduction

East Grand Preparatory opened in the fall of 2008 and was originally referred to as Reconciliation Scholar's Academy. However, it changed its name to East Grand Preparatory in 2014. The charter school is a twelfth generation open-enrollment charter school that its founders created to offer an oasis for at-risk children in the geographical area of East Dallas. It was strategically located so that it could be an information and opportunity center for families within the community.

The school's *mission* is to work in an educational partnership with families to provide a distinctive environment of educational opportunity for all children and young people in its community. Students are expected to have the opportunity to become well prepared, life-long learners possessing the character, knowledge, and wisdom necessary to succeed, lead, and contribute to their community and to their fellow man.

The school's *vision* is to work in partnership with families to prepare children and young people to fulfill productive leadership roles in society and the philosophy of education is grounded in the belief that *every* student can learn and that working together with parents, the district can ensure success for each student. The overriding goal is, in partnership with families, to meet the academic, intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and creative needs of its students.

East Grand Preparatory attempts to meet the students' interpersonal needs by providing an opportunity to develop strong character, integrity, a commitment to community service, and a positive vision for the student's lives and for their community. Intellectual needs are meant to be satisfied by providing students with instruction across the full range of intellectual abilities: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Academic needs are

met by assessing, placing, and providing educational services for all students accepted into the charter school. Social needs are met by providing students with opportunities to develop healthy relationships within the family, their peers, members of their community, and with society at large. Emotional needs are meant to be achieved by fostering a secure environment that creates and reinforces awareness within students that they are loved and respected. Physical needs are met through providing students with appropriate fitness activities. Creative needs are met through providing students with fine arts opportunities intended to awaken, cultivate and develop the student's talents, creative gifts, and abilities.

Ultimately, the overriding goal is to provide students with the opportunity to be well-prepared for success in college and other postsecondary opportunities. Set forth below are the *core values* stated or implied by the district's mission, vision, and philosophy:

- Families are charged with the primary responsibility for the comprehensive well-being of their children and the district must therefore work in partnership with the family.
- The greatest need of the students is to know that they are loved and respected by all staff in all circumstances.
- The primary assumption of the district is that all students are college bound.
- East Grand Preparatory will provide students with developmentally appropriate opportunities to acquire the knowledge and values necessary for success throughout their school years up to and including college.
- East Grand Preparatory will provide students with developmentally appropriate instruction that addresses the spiritual, academic, intellectual, social, emotional, physical and creative needs of its students.

- All students have the potential to serve their community and their fellow man as leaders and role models.
- All students deserve a high-quality college bound education regardless of their zip code.

The expected *student outcomes* stated or implied by the district's vision, mission and philosophy is that students will:

- Model their lives after adults exhibiting wisdom, character and a love of learning.
- Acquire basic academic skills.
- Take advantage, when appropriate, of advanced academic opportunities.
- Develop a strong work ethic.
- Be motivated.
- Develop thinking skills.
- Develop self-discipline.
- Develop the skills to acquire knowledge independently.
- Develop a love of learning.
- Learn to use the full range of their intellectual abilities: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- Develop healthy relationships.
- Know that they are loved and respected in all circumstances and by all faculty and staff.
- Recognize the importance of the human body, with the implications this brings regarding health, fitness and lifestyle choices.

- Cultivate and develop students' creative talents while guiding them to use and apply those creative gifts and abilities in service to their community and their fellow man.
- Remain faithful to the values learned at East Grand Preparatory in the face of pressure to compromise.

Action Plan

There is growing scientific evidence that investing in keeping young children healthy leads to bountiful rewards throughout their entire lives. A strong foundation can help put a child on the path toward positive achievement in school, career, and community. A review of the literature shows that high-quality foundational education; nurturing, stable teachers and relationships; good nutrition and physical activity; positive learning experiences; and a safe home, neighborhood and environment can also have a beneficial long-term impact on a child's development

In the spirit of continuous quality improvement, this plan is intended to be a living document—one that will be used to mark progress and highlight where corrections are needed based on data-based evidence. It is intended to complement existing strategic plans, support existing efforts affecting young children not reflected in the action plan, and increase alignment among those efforts under the rubric of the plan's six components. A team of educational administrators at East Grand Preparatory will be responsible for coordinating, monitoring and reporting on progress made on the strategies and actions in the plan. However, this plan belongs to the entire community of East Dallas. As with the premise of *It Takes a Village*, every member of society has a role in making the strategies of this plan a reality. The six components listed below are designed to achieve those conditions of success for all young children, ages three to five, at East Grand Preparatory and their families.

Component One: *facilitate family to family support.*

Early childhood administrators and staff at East Grand Preparatory will create safe and respectful environments in which families can learn from each other, both individually and in group settings; invite members of the local community to share educational and real-world experiences; and ensure opportunities for continuous participation in learning events designed for families, including family leadership training.

Specific strategies:

- Social events for families (e.g. Meet the Teacher, Holiday Carnival, Storybook Parade; Talent Show)
- Family Reading Program
- Annual Parent Meeting
- Staff/Parent Communication
- Parent-Teacher Organization

Component Two: *establish a network of community resources.*

Early childhood administrators and staff, in collaboration with the families of Pre-Kindergarten students, will develop and support a family advisory council; utilize community resources to augment social, intellectual, and personal development; develop, adopt, and implement strategic goals within the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) to target family engagement opportunities within the community of East Dallas and beyond; engage families in interlocal activities, both social and educational; and use appropriate tools such as surveys and/or focus groups to gather family feedback on various school components.

Specific strategies:

- Pinnacle's 21st Century Survey for parents, students, and staff

- Monthly meetings of Family Advisory Council
- Develop interlocal agreements with local libraries, churches, and institutions of higher learning for the ultimate benefit of EGP families
- Educational field trips for students and family members
- Membership and participation in the Grassroots Efforts of the Texas Charter School Association, including attendance at the Charter Schools Rally in Austin, Texas in April 2017
- Implementation of Parent Square, a private means of social media between parents and EGP staff for the express purpose to ease communication on important educational activities and school calendar events, including inclement weather notices.

Component Three: *increase family participation in decision-making.*

As previously mentioned, EGP administrators will develop and support a family advisory council; utilize a survey to garner the thoughts, opinions, and decisions of all EGP parents, students, and staff; engage families in shaping programmatic activities and cultivating the expectation of two-way communication; and provide each family with the opportunity to review and provide input on programmatic practices, policies, procedures, and events in order to ensure the Pre-Kindergarten program is responsive to the needs of our families.

Specific strategies:

- Monthly meetings of Family Advisory Council
- Parent/Student/School Contract. The contract will outline how all three entities (parent, student, and school personnel) will share responsibility for improved student academic achievement

- Opportunities through the PTO for family members to serve as advocates and leaders on various campus and district committees and groups to further educational benefits for Pre-Kindergarten students and program.
- Pinnacle's 21st Century Survey for parents, students, and staff

Component Four: *equip families with tools to extend and enhance learning.*

EGP's Pre-Kindergarten program will provide family engagement opportunities to support the family/school partnership through educational resources that strengthen learning at home. Administrators and staff will also provide opportunities for family members to receive informative training on creating a home environment connected to extending learning experiences. There will be resources provided to assist parents in helping their Pre-Kindergarten children through the transition of starting school by allowing families to visit the school in advance of the first day of school. Further, home learning exercises will be provided in which families can engage together at home through social media, computerized technology, newsletters, and/or Parent Square. Finally, teachers and staff will collaborate with parents to teach appropriate responses to their children's behavior in non-punitive, positive, and supporting methodologies.

Specific strategies:

- Monthly meetings of Family Advisory Council
- Implementation of Parent Square, a private means of social media between parents and EGP staff for the express purpose to ease communication on important educational activities and school calendar events, including inclement weather notices
- Approach parents as equal partners in the child's education while emphasizing the parent as the child's first teacher

- Meet the Teacher night will be scheduled before the first day of class
- Present the social-emotional learning Pre-Kindergarten plan to parents through social media, monthly Family Advisory meetings, and Parent Square
- Provide all parental communication in both Spanish and English languages

Component Five: *develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks.*

Cityscape Schools, Inc. is dedicated to providing essential professional development for our faculty and staff to support communication and engagement with families, both Pre-Kindergarten and beyond. East Grand Preparatory has been named as a candidate school for the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) for both their globally recognized Primary Years Programme (PYP) and their Middle Years Programme (MYP). Through the IBO, every Pre-Kindergarten teacher and instructional aide must attend a two and a half-day teacher training, which concentrates on the essential elements of teaching and learning, as well as the IB Learner Profile, a set of educational ideals to inspire, motivate and focus the work of teachers and unite them in a common purpose. Further, Pre-Kindergarten leadership will attend a three-day workshop in North Carolina to utilize the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition (ECERS-3) for the ultimate purpose of evaluating each Pre-Kindergarten classroom environment. This environment rating scale focuses on the full range needs of Pre-Kindergarten children. Further, each Pre-Kindergarten teacher will be assessed through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which looks at classroom interactions that facilitate student learning and help improve the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions. There is a specific scale offered by CLASS for the Pre-Kindergarten age group.

Specific strategies:

- IBO teacher training scheduled for Summer 2017
- ECERS-3 training for two Pre-Kindergarten administrators scheduled for September 19-21, 2016
- ECERS-3 evaluations for all Pre-Kindergarten teachers scheduled between November 7 – November 18, 2016
- CLASS evaluations for all Pre-Kindergarten teachers scheduled between September-October 2016
- Results of assessments (ECERS-3 and CLASS) evaluated by educational leadership team and further professional development activities planned based on the needs assessment development from the data evaluation.
- Monthly trainings with Dr. Diana Geisler on such topics as social-emotional curriculum, early intervention learning strategies, and how to assist families in crisis

Component Six: *evaluate family engagement efforts and use evaluations for****continuous improvement***

As with the Pinnacle survey and the Parent Square portal, the campus will continue to develop data collection and communication systems to monitor family engagement to narrow achievement gaps. The campus will also utilize data to ensure proper alignment between family engagement activities and successful learning outcomes at the Pre-Kindergarten level. Finally, campus administrators will ensure this action plan is a living document open to change and one that is an initial component for continuous improvement and adjustment.

Specific strategies:

- Hire Early Childhood Director – Summer 2017

- Implementation of Parent Square, a private means of social media between parents and EGP staff for the express purpose to ease communication on important educational activities and school calendar events
- Pinnacle's 21st Century Survey for parents, students, and staff
- Utilize evaluation forms at the end of each Family Advisory Meeting (both Spanish and English) to assess effectiveness and value from the perspective of the parent.

Proposed Dates of Family Advisory Council Meetings

- September 8, 2016
- October 6, 2016
- November 3, 2016
- December 1, 2016
- January 12, 2017
- February 2, 2017
- March 2, 2017
- April 6, 2017
- May 4, 2017

(Agendas and handouts for each meeting will be posted on campus web site immediately following meeting's conclusion for those unable to attend. Web site address is www.cityscapeschools.org)

Conclusion

This action plan focuses on addressing the educational needs of Pre-Kindergarten children at East Grand Preparatory, ages three to five years. The plan is only one element of a continuum of interventions to address the connection of family and school for the ultimate

educational benefit of the child. A further element of this continuum is the ongoing professional development of faculty and staff to include training on integrating the family unit in to educational design and extended learning opportunities for all Pre-Kindergarten students.

The action plan is based on the conviction that 1) every child deserves an equal chance to access, partake in and benefit from education, no matter their zip code; 2) every child should have the opportunity to reach his or her full educational capacity for personal, social and financial reasons; and 3) education is a significant aspect in promoting social inclusion and economic development. The appropriate environments, experiences, and investments in our young children can produce a lifetime of benefits. Failure to appropriately support young children combined with the hardships that all too many children face today can lead to academic failure, problematic lives, lower salaries, and health issues in later years. Thus, this plan is the outlay to better prepare these children to succeed in school and, therefore, have the opportunity for success later in life.