



## UPLIFT EDUCATION

Engaging Communities in New Public Schools

[www.uplifteducation.org](http://www.uplifteducation.org)



### MISSION

The mission of **UPLIFT Education** is to create and sustain schools of excellence that empower students to reach their highest potential and inspire a lifelong love of learning, achievement, service and responsible citizenship.

### HISTORY

From its inception in 1996, UPLIFT Education has focused on changing the lives of students from all backgrounds by preparing them for college and for engaged citizenship. Despite start-up challenges, UPLIFT Education schools have earned *exemplary* or *recognized* ratings, including its most recent urban campus which is 75% Hispanic, low income families.

**North Hills** is one of the highest-ranking schools in the nation (12<sup>th</sup> from *Newsweek*, May 8, 2006) based on the percentage of students taking and succeeding on AP and IB and public high school SAT tests. In 2003, North Hills was accredited by the prestigious International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) to offer its IB Diploma Program recognized around the world. Last year, 100% of North Hills' graduates are now attending a college or university and 100% of last year's IB Diploma candidates earned an IB Diploma. In October 2006, the College Board announced that twenty-eight students at The North Hills School had earned the designation of AP Scholar by the College Board in recognition of their exceptional achievement on the college-level Advanced Placement Program (AP) Exams.

**Peak Preparatory** opened in fall of 2004 and currently operates through Texas High School Project support, successfully serving the educational needs of 350 students in East Dallas, a community that is largely first generation immigrants offering kindergarten through ninth grade.

### VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The long-term UPLIFT vision is to open and operate charter public schools for an increasingly diverse body of students who will be prepared to enter competitive colleges and universities throughout the world and become informed, successful and compassionate citizens and leaders in their communities, our country and the world. The carefully developed vision of UPLIFT Education is built on the following theory of educational change:

- **UPLIFT Schools** encourages students to raise the expectations they place on themselves.
- **UPLIFT Schools** outperform other available educational alternatives in our communities.
- **UPLIFT Schools** prepare students for college and instill civic responsibility.
- **UPLIFT Schools** encourage parents to demand the highest level of school performance.
- **UPLIFT Schools** encourage families to raise the expectations they have for public education.

As school communities strengthen, the result is improvement in public policy and practices that improve the effectiveness of school education for everyone.

**REQUIREMENTS TO SUSTAIN UPLIFT VISION** - Those charters who are doing the right thing by their students and meeting the promise must have funding to survive. These schools must have a stable source of funding to ensure that:

- teachers working extended hours with students are paid for their services competitively with urban districts and
- teachers and students have safe buildings in which effective instruction can occur.

**UPLIFT Education** has been waging a fierce battle to deal with these issues. UPLIFT was one of the first charter schools to sell tax exempt bonds five years ago and has successfully conducted another financing this year. UPLIFT was one of the first charter operators in the country to receive an investment grade rating from Moody's Investment Services and this past year qualified for credit enhancement through bond insurance. Following are issues UPLIFT strongly urges you to consider for the reality of our future success:

- Operating with more than 25% less funds has forced UPLIFT to pay teachers less than market value and our last two years have tested sustainability of this financial challenge. Some of the teachers who are largely responsible for North Hills high national rating, teachers who rose to the occasion because they believed in the legislative opportunity provided by the charter option 10 years ago, have been open about their inability to continue to support their families at lower salaries indefinitely.

## **Conclusion**

- Effective charter schools like those that are part of UPLIFT Education embody a singular compact: They are free from much traditional regulation and in exchange are held accountable for results. This simple bargain **can** produce an extraordinary opportunity within public education; public schools reaching a new level of excellence. This new kind of school will:
  1. Be independently operated, locally controlled, and typically started from scratch by passionate education entrepreneurs.
  2. Be offering open admission and free tuition to all who apply; utilize a lottery process if demand exceeds available slots.
- Charter schools have appealed to many donors across the country as an ideal way to invest in public education. This is a unique opportunity for charters; however, philanthropists are interested in donating to causes that have not only a strong model and mission, but also one that has a sustainable plan and focus on the future.
- Democratic society requires rigorous, responsible and relevant education to meet today's more demanding tests of competence and higher standards of excellence. Children need wider access to this level of education to address issues confronting leaders and citizens in the 21st century. This is difficult work and like all difficult work, it requires bold solutions and an environment where examples of positive change are rewarded and those that are not succeeding are held accountable.
- We have a chance and the responsibility to influence the young students who will be citizens of our country. Opening schools for these students is our privilege and our vital responsibility. As the students from UPLIFT schools grow and assume leadership in their societies, it is the hope of UPLIFT Education that they will be members of this new generation who, driven by their own wide knowledge and inspiration, will change their communities, our country and ultimately the world.

## **LEGISLATIVE ACTION THAT WOULD SUPPORT GROWTH OF UPLIFT EDUCATION**

**Per pupil facilities funding (to secure or operate school facilities) based on performance.**

**Parity between the district level adjustment funding of charter schools and comparable traditional school districts and a hold harmless for those charter schools damaged by statewide averaging is needed.**

**Expedite the closing of fraudulent or consistently poor performing charter schools.**

**Broad access to a state-funded Texas Credit Enhancement Program that allows effective charters the best opportunity to issue and sell bonds to fund facilities is needed.**

**Public charter schools and respected private leaders should be represented as full members in any state decision-making body dealing with public charter schools if regulations are to be reduced.**

**A comprehensive analysis is needed of school funding reports to determine the financial status of charter schools.**