



## Spring Branch District-Charter Collaboration Compact<sup>1</sup>

**Date Signed: December 2011**

**Number of Students: 33,293 (2010-2011)**

**Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 4.1%**

**Charter Authorizers: Texas Education Agency, Spring Branch Independent School District**

**School District Governing Body: Elected board (all positions elected at-large)**

### Overview

In Spring Branch Independent School District (SBISD), which lies mostly in Houston, Texas, the two charter schools the district opened have had better results with at-risk students than neighborhood schools have, and they maintain long waiting lists. District leaders, recognizing this success, were motivated to expand their school choice options to include partnerships with charter school organizations. Aiming to learn from and replicate the best examples in the area, district leaders agreed to a bold and detailed partnership, called the SKY Partnership, with Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Houston and YES Prep Public Schools. Charter leaders were interested in increasing access to district facilities and expanding choice in untapped areas of Houston, and the agreement included shared buildings for district and charter schools. As compared to other compact cities, the SKY Partnership has seen impressive collaboration wins over a short period, including the participation of district central office staff, principals, and teachers in KIPP and YES Prep trainings. Compact leaders attribute this success to the clear commitment articulated by the superintendents and school board, the process of making decisions together through a formal steering committee and working groups, and their work to create buy-in within their own organizations.<sup>2</sup> The compact has created an intense focus within the district to pursue a portfolio strategy, and district leaders see the compact as the beginning of a larger process to meet family demand and provide school choice through multiple means.

### Key Compact Agreements

### Big Wins

Community outreach campaign that engages families in developing and selecting school options.	District and charter superintendents and boards jointly gave the message that we serve all families through the SKY Partnership.
Provide charter schools space in underutilized campuses.	Model co-location contract was put in place for underutilized SBISD campuses (KIPP Courage College Prep at Landrum Middle School and YES Prep Northbrook Middle School).
SBISD will develop a menu of contract services for KIPP and YES Prep that are of equitable cost to standard district services.	Contract includes a menu of contract services at equitable costs; shared extracurricular and athletic programs and student services.
Develop an equitable funding formula for charters who are compact signatories.	Co-location contract provides equitable funding.
Collaborate across campuses to ensure curricular alignment and share best practices.	SKY teachers observe each other and provide feedback; instructional leaders observe some teachers together and calibrate observation metrics.
Create avenues for common leadership development; ensure instructional leaders are trained to ensure students are college-ready.	District principals and central office staff participated in KIPP's summer leadership program; YES Prep Teaching Excellence Program is training 19 SBISD teachers at co-location sites and campuses across the district.
Establish a common longitudinal data system; explore the possibility of a common school report card.	
Coordinate lottery application windows.	Charters aligned lottery and admission systems with existing SBISD admissions and transfer policies.

1. See [this compact on CRPE's website](#).

2. [Learn more about the SKY Partnership's Steering Committee](#).

## Challenges and Next Steps

District and charter leaders do not want to take their early successes for granted and are aware of the enormous amount of work needed to meet the district's goal that by 2017, SBISD will double the number of students completing a higher education credential. District leaders continue to focus on collaborations that they believe will produce systemwide change. As a first priority, district leaders are broadening their talent strategies and building an in-house leadership pipeline, drawing from charter lessons on how to best recruit, hire, and train teachers and leaders.<sup>3</sup> SBISD hired Elliott Whitney, a former KIPP teacher and administrator, to head the initiative. The recent \$2.2 million Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation compact award will support part of this work. Plans are also underway to increase the number of charter schools, but many uncertainties exist around scale. Can district-charter co-locations increase student performance across campuses and the system? In retrospect, district leaders wished they had included compact agreements on how to measure and compare student performance across schools. For now, compact leaders will assess student engagement in both district and charter schools. SBISD students in grades 4 through 12 and KIPP and YES Prep students will participate in the Tripod survey, which was developed by Harvard economist Ronald Ferguson and seeks student feedback about teacher effectiveness.

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3. See CRPE's webinar "[Managing Talent and Sharing Instructional Practices in Spring Branch.](#)"