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Future Of Houston Charter Schools



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Charter schools are growing in number and popularity in the Houston area. But there are still a lot of misconceptions about charter schools — even in the education community — which is why the Harris County Department of Education invited charter school leaders to a forum for the first time.

Yes Prep and **KIPP** are two of the most well-known charter school programs in Houston. This was the first time they were invited to present their ideas at an educators' forum at the **Harris County Department of Education**.

KIPP Co-Founder Mike Feinberg says a lot of people still don't understand what a charter school is.

"I don't think it's fully understood yet that charter schools are public schools, they're part of our public school system. The hope and aspiration for public charter schools are they can provide the R&D for public schools, where innovation and creativity can flourish. New ideas can start there, the ideas that work can grow to the rest of the public school system and the ideas that don't work can go in the graveyard."

KIPP started in Houston with one school and now runs 109 schools in 20 states.

Yes Prep has had similar success in Houston, growing from one school 16 years ago to eight campuses with more than 4,000 students today.

Yes Prep President Jason Bernal says he sees a growing trend of more cooperation and collaboration between charter schools and traditional ISDs.

"As we've gotten bigger and we've learned more about charter schools, we've gotten smarter about how we work with one another and how we serve students."

Bernal says Yes Prep's goal is to have 10,000 students enrolled within six years.

KIPP's Feinberg says he thinks in the next decade, traditional schools will start to look more like charter schools, with a greater emphasis on college graduation rather than test scores.

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