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Contact: Kimberly Smith  
Kimberly.smith@aliefisd.net  
(281) 498-8730

Heather Vega  
[Heather@larsonpr.com](mailto:Heather@larsonpr.com)  
(925) 784-4608

## **ALIEF SCHOOL DISTRICT BLAZES NEW TRAIL FOR EXPANDING EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

*District leads the state in expansion of pre-kindergarten programs for students*

HOUSTON – Award-winning [Alief Independent School District](#) is ensuring local children get a head start on their educational journeys by expanding its full-time pre-kindergarten program, paving the way for other Texas schools ahead of the state-wide funding increase for early education in September. As the program expands, Alief is partnering with the [Relay Graduate School of Education](#) to prepare exceptional educators for the new teaching positions.

This month, the district is implementing early education programs in five elementary schools before expanding the model to campuses throughout Houston in the 2020-2021 school year. Alief leaders have been at the forefront of the battle to expand early education in Texas, with their Superintendent HD Chambers acting as a vocal advocate and working alongside legislators to develop and pass a new policy to require funding for full-day pre-kindergarten programs in the state.

“We are increasing our emphasis on pre-kindergarten learning and providing resources and support to our staff to ensure we have a quality early education program,” said Chambers. “Full-day programs expose our kids to the school structure they will experience throughout elementary school, providing an essential foundation that prepares students to improve literacy and increase learning.”

Effective full-time early education programs provide the foundation children need as they enter school and result in [achievement gains in math and literacy](#) that continue into kindergarten and beyond.

Within the next three years, Alief plans to offer full-day pre-kindergarten programming in all its elementary schools. To meet the increased demand for highly effective teachers, the district is partnering with Relay to prepare teachers for the many new positions. Focused on ensuring all graduates are fully prepared to be effective teachers in the classroom, Relay provides aspiring educators with a supportive, gradual introduction to teaching.

“Through Relay I was prepared for everything I needed to be in the teaching profession. Getting that experience was critical,” said Relay graduate and Hern Elementary School kindergarten teacher Net Monsanto. “When my students walked in on our first day, I was prepared to really focus on their needs and confidently lead them in our time together.”

This year, Alief schools are hosting 13 Relay teaching residents, up from just two residents serving in the district last year. The number of Relay-affiliated educators will continue to grow as Alief expands its early education programs throughout Houston in the coming years.

“A teacher is one of the most influential pieces of a student’s learning experience,” said Houston Relay Dean Maya Weatherton. “We’re excited to partner with Alief to ensure our youngest learners get a head start in a successful life by working with amazing teachers.”

### **About Alief Independent School District**

The Alief Independent School District is an award-winning organization serving students from pre-kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Houston, Texas. Educating over [46,000 students across 46 schools each year](#), Alief is dedicated to providing an exemplary education in collaboration with parents and the local community. The celebrated district is at the forefront of expanding full-time pre-kindergarten learning opportunities, offering early education programs in five elementary schools during the 2019-2020 school year. Alief is committed to helping students grow through meaningful work and relationships that prepare them for college and careers after graduation. For more information, visit the Alief website ([www.aliefisd.net](http://www.aliefisd.net)).

### **About Relay Graduate School of Education**

The Relay Graduate School of Education is a national, accredited, nonprofit institution of higher education whose mission is to teach teachers and school leaders to develop in all students the academic skills and strength of character needed to succeed in college and life. Now serving over 4,000 teachers in 19 cities and more than 1,000 leaders nationwide, Relay is eager to bring about transformational change in educator preparation. Relay is committed to using practice and feedback to become *the* place where a new generation of continuously improving, results-focused individuals can fulfill their destiny in the world’s greatest profession. For more information, please visit the Relay website ([www.relay.edu](http://www.relay.edu)) or follow Relay on Twitter ([@RelayGSE](#)).