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Wyatt Academy and University Prep to Form Partnership Wyatt Academy classrooms to close at end of school year

Denver, CO - Amid lower birth rates and several years of under-enrollment, the Wyatt Academy board of directors has voted to form a partnership with University Prep, a nearby network of two public charter schools.

Wyatt Academy is a K-5, public charter school in north central Denver. Like public schools across metro Denver, Wyatt has faced several challenging trends, including lower birth rates, a soaring cost of living and limited funding. After struggling with several consecutive years of under-enrollment, the Board faced the tough decision about how to ensure Wyatt's long-term financial viability.

"It is heartbreaking to be confronted with this decision. The stark reality facing schools in Denver and nationwide is that low enrollment is not financially sustainable," said Wyatt Academy Board Chair Katie Brown. "Rather than just close our doors, we wanted to make a proactive decision that would help carry forward Wyatt's commitment to community and high-quality education."

Wyatt Academy and U Prep are both rated green in Colorado's School Performance Framework. While the Wyatt Academy classrooms will close at the end of this school year, the partnership ensures that all Wyatt Academy students can transition to University Prep (U Prep) for the 2024-25 academic year if they desire. U Prep is one of several options families will have through the district's SchoolChoice process.

Several nearby schools have seen a significant drop in their enrollment, with overall K-5 enrollment in the community decreasing by more than 20 percent over the last six years. Wyatt Academy enrollment has remained relatively flat during that time, with about 200 students.

"These enrollment numbers don't garner enough revenue for us to offer robust programming or pay enough of a competitive wage to attract and retain qualified staff," added Wyatt Academy Board Vice Chair Amy Younggren. "This has resulted in significant cuts in recent years, including art enrichment, our librarian, reading and math interventionists, paraprofessionals from

every grade level except kindergarten, a dedicated campus nurse, onsite tech support, and teacher supports like deans, human resources and professional development programs.”

In considering U Prep as a potential partner, the Wyatt board conducted an in-depth review of academic outcomes; teacher compensation and retention; financial viability; and the availability of community services.

U Prep operates two high-performing public charter schools in North Central Denver for students in K-5th grades. Both campuses are about 1.5 miles, a 6-minute drive, from Wyatt. U Prep was founded in 2011 and has a proven track record as a stable, resilient, community-focused nonprofit.

“Wyatt Academy has not only been an example of strong academic achievement but also a pillar in the larger community,” said David Singer, founder and executive director of University Prep. “We are deeply committed to carrying Wyatt’s legacy forward through this partnership, honoring their long-standing commitment to our shared community.”

In addition to offering a seat to all interested Wyatt students at either of its campuses, U Prep will offer Wyatt Academy staff an opportunity to explore careers in the U Prep network. U Prep is also committed to spending the next several months meeting with and learning from Wyatt families and staff about everything from academics to community services to ensure Wyatt’s legacy will continue and create a welcoming, inclusive transition.

Family and community services currently offered at the Empowerment Center in the Wyatt Academy building will continue through July. Meanwhile, Wyatt and U Prep leadership has committed to helping ensure the long-term availability of these services in the community.

“Wyatt has shaped the lives of countless students,” Brown said. “And while this move represents the end of an era, we are dedicated to supporting our families during this transition.”

About Wyatt Academy

Wyatt Academy is a tuition-free public charter school located in north central Denver, serving about 200 students in kindergarten through 5th grade. It is located in the Cole/Whittier neighborhood in a building that has served as an elementary school and middle school under various names and leadership since 1898. The campus became Wyatt Academy under the current leadership in 2013. Learn more at www.wyattacademy.org.

About University Prep

University Prep is a network of tuition-free public charter schools in North Central Denver, with K-5th grade campuses on Arapahoe Street and Steele Street, serving more than 600 students across its two campuses. U Prep was founded in 2011 with a mission to prepare every child for a four-year college degree and a life of opportunity. Learn more at uprepschool.org.