



For Immediate Release

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Pre-K 4 SA Kicks Off Civic Engagement Curriculum with Early Voting

Gracias San Antonio encourages children to express their opinions and participate as young citizens

SAN ANTONIO — [Pre-K 4 SA's Gracias San Antonio: Children Are Citizens Project](#) is grounded in the belief that children are not just future citizens but are citizens today. The program kicked off October 19 with early voting for the first time since the program began. The program encourages students to express their opinions and participate in the civic and cultural life of San Antonio.

[Gracias San Antonio](#) historically begins each November with the children's participation in a program-wide election to vote for a local non-profit to support for the year. This year's charities include the [Big Brother Big Sisters of South Texas](#), [Purple Up USA](#), and [Therapy Animals of San Antonio](#). Children and their families are encouraged to create "campaign signs" for their favorite charity to be displayed at the Pre-K 4 SA education centers polling sites during early voting. The "campaign volunteering" and voting activity encourages at-home discussion related to civic engagement and participation leading up to the election.

Pre-K 4 SA is incorporating early voting into the Gracias timeline and curriculum to create the opportunity for remote learners and their families to participate, as well as create safer polling practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Electronic ballots are available for early voting between Oct. 19 and Oct. 30 for remote learners and families. In-person voting for staff and children at the Pre-K 4 SA Education Centers will take place on Election Day, Nov. 3. Social distancing and electronic ballot device sanitizing between each voter will be enforced.

"This is a curriculum that lasts the whole year and engages children to understand that they can make their city a better place even at just age four," Pre-K 4 SA CEO Sarah Baray said. "The children are always excited to learn about the charities, and to participate in the vote. But the idea behind this program is two-fold. The voting is timed with our own local and national elections to encourage children to go home and talk to their families about the importance to vote so their opinions can also be heard."

Election results at Pre-K 4 SA will be announced on the afternoon of November 3.

Activities continue throughout the year as children and families engage in City Explorations with their teachers to visit different places around San Antonio. Later in the year, local artists join children in the classroom to create authentic art pieces using a variety of artistic mediums to express the children's perspective of their city and the places they visited. More than 100 pieces will be created and displayed at an art exhibit and auction in the Spring. Money raised from the art auction will be donated to the chosen nonprofit organization.

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For Media Purposes:

Pre-K 4 SA has created an electronic Gracias Media Press Kit located at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NWqgQui2J5W_J1x2IfanG4UdDiPPAqjH?usp=sharing. Here you will find photos and videos to support a story if you are interested.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we cannot allow non-essential employees into the education centers. This link includes photos and videos from the several classes who participated in early voting at a Pre-K 4 SA Polling Center.

If media would like to capture interviews with parents, teachers, or Pre-K 4 SA CEO Sarah Baray, we will arrange that on an as needed basis by Facetime, Zoom or outdoor opportunity.

About Pre-K 4 SA:

Pre-K 4 SA is a comprehensive early childhood initiative aimed at changing the education and workforce trajectory of San Antonio in one generation. Pre-K 4 SA offers full-day pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds living in the City of San Antonio. Pre-K 4 SA is free for qualifying students and also accepts tuition-paying students. The school day begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. Extended hours are available at no additional charge from 7:15 to 8 a.m., and from 3 to 6 p.m. for working families. Breakfast, lunch and two snacks are included and free transportation is available to all students. Pre-K 4 SA has four Education Centers located throughout the city: North Education Center, 3635 Medical Dr.; South Education Center, 7031 S. New Braunfels Ave.; East Education Center, 5230 Eisenhower Rd.; and West Education Center, 1235 Enrique M. Barrera Memorial Parkway. The Gardendale Early Learning Program powered by Pre-K 4 SA is the first replication site and was made possible through a partnership with Edgewood Independent School District. This program creates greater capacity for high-quality early education with both pre-k and kindergarten classrooms. The Pre-K 4 SA Professional Learning program provides pre-kindergarten through third grade educators in San Antonio with complementary continuing education to support best practice instruction to help every child in San Antonio excel. The Pre-K 4 SA Competitive Grants program provides more than \$4 million in funding annually to increase quality and access in early childhood programs throughout San Antonio. Visit www.prek4sa.com for more information.