



CHANGE LIVES!



TOGETHER
WE'VE
MENTORED
1,000
4th GRADERS

YEAR-END SUMMARY

2020-2021

WHAT A YEAR!

3 New Schools added
Leadership Academy at Como
Elementary
(Fort Worth ISD)
Major Cheney Elementary
(Birdville ISD)
West Handley Elementary
(Fort Worth ISD)

*"In short, we saw grit,
perseverance, and resilience."*



Hello Academy 4 Friends,

It goes without saying that we've experienced quite a bit of change this year. Maybe you thrive in change, or maybe you typically try to avoid it. Regardless, I think we can all agree that the past year disrupted our routines and our comforts, and forced us to grow like never before.

Before each school year, Academy 4 selects a theme to guide our vision and work. This year's theme was "Change Lives." We've seen Academy 4 change the lives of thousands of mentors and students throughout our nine years, but this year "Change Lives" took on a whole new meaning.

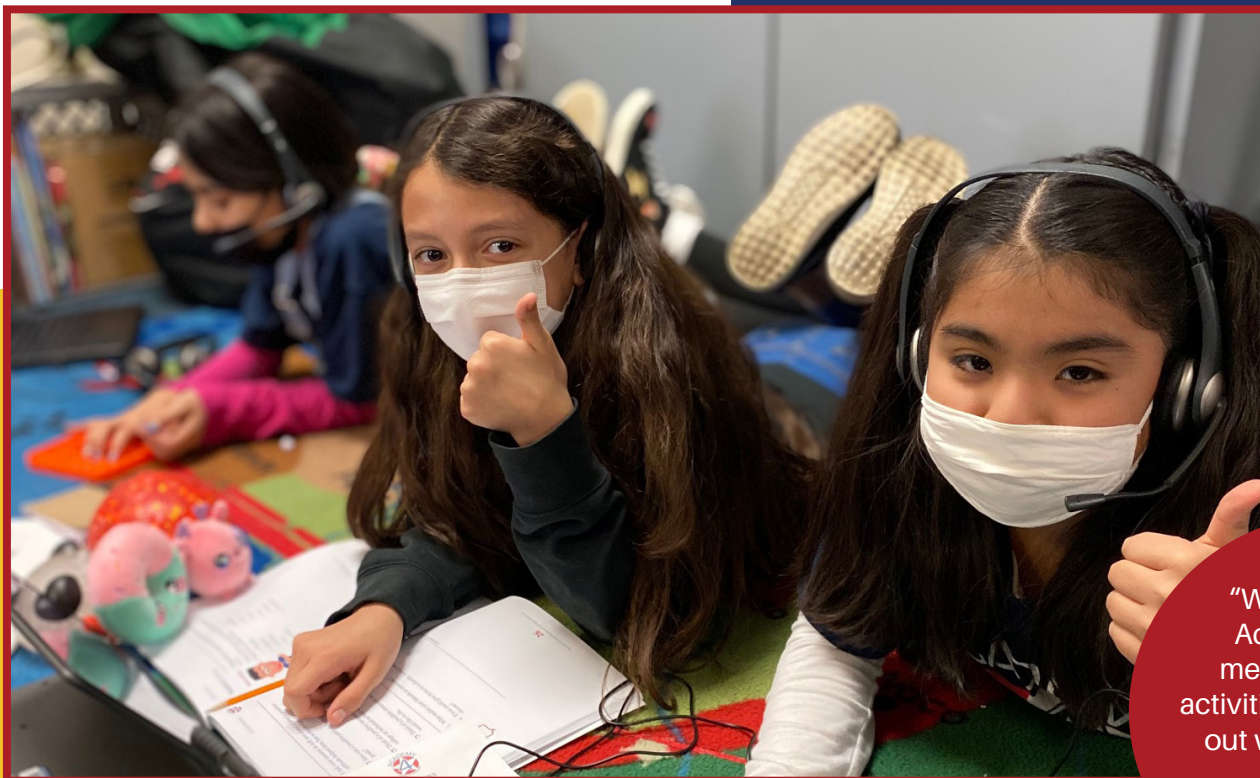
We saw lives changed by the trauma of confinement and isolation brought on by the pandemic. We saw the negative change in children's mental health and academic performance. We saw already at-risk families lose sources of income. We saw homes and schools ruined by the Texas winter storm.

Through Academy 4, we also saw lives changed for the better. We saw children show incredible flexibility in adapting to online learning. We saw adults who put aside the fact that they had struggles of their own, and chose to sacrificially serve through mentoring. We saw our church partners step up in big and important ways to serve our schools and their families beyond Academy 4 Fridays. We saw our staff change our entire program model to work online via Zoom to ensure that we could continue to foster relationships which encourage and give a voice to children in need. In short, we saw grit, perseverance, and resilience.

I hope you'll enjoy seeing some of the ways we saw our theme of "Change Lives" come to life this year. Thank you for your support of Academy 4 and for helping change the lives of more than 1,000 children in our communities this year.

John Shearer
Executive Director





"What I like about Academy 4 is my mentor and the fun activities we do. Hanging out with each other is just fun!"

-Sama, 4th Grader

ONLINE PROGRAM

Last summer, as it became clear that schools would need to pivot their entire learning model, we too saw that Academy 4 would have to look different this year. Our staff and volunteers spent the summer completely flipping our program to an online model. As you can imagine this was no small feat, requiring creativity and logistical work to ensure our mentors could still meet students in a safe and effective way. In all honesty, it was difficult and labor-intensive, and we weren't even sure we would see a positive outcome. But, as always, our dedicated community came through and made online Academy 4 Fridays an amazing time of fun and connection.

Each Academy 4 Friday, mentors and 4th graders gathered on Zoom where they enjoyed the LEADERS Assembly and then met in groups of four for mentoring time. Students and mentors built real relationships and learned what it means to be a leader. Together they processed the hardships of the pandemic, the challenges of online learning, the effects of the Texas winter storm, and more. Through dedication and resilience, both students' and mentors' lives were changed for the better.



SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

This year, Academy 4 volunteers and partners recognized the unique difficulties that the pandemic brought to our partner schools. Together, we decided to not only support the social and emotional needs of teachers and students, but their physical needs as well.

School Supplies

Throughout the year, Academy 4 church partners stepped up to provide school supplies, snacks, individual water bottles, teachers' room supplies, and classroom supplies to our partner schools.



Technology Donations

At the beginning of the school year, many school districts were struggling to attain enough technology for the new online learning model which required every student to have a laptop. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Academy 4 supplied over 300 laptops and headsets to our partner schools in Fort Worth.

"There was an exorbitant number of supplies. I've never seen this much in my whole teaching career. I didn't know whether to cry or pray or what. Thank you so much. These were things we didn't even ask for. I was exploding. Thank you so much!"

- Ms. Garcia, Pillow Elementary School Teacher



Teacher Appreciation

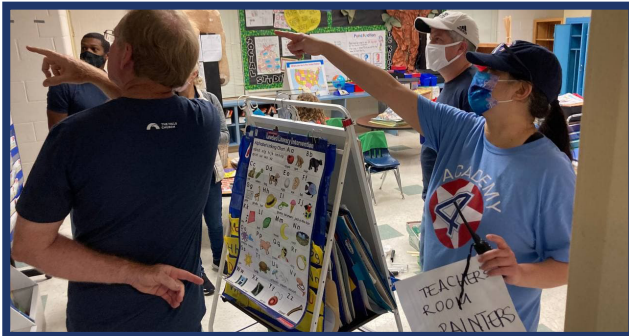
In October, Academy 4 held a Teacher Appreciation Day for our partner schools to recognize their hardwork in this challenging year. We provided lunch to school staff, and our volunteers wrote encouraging notes.

"You have no idea how perfect your timing was and how much teachers and staff appreciated your kindness and generosity! As you may know, teachers are working on diagnostic assessments and report card grades, all while conducting concurrent teaching, so today's lunch was an absolute highlight for them. We are so blessed to have Academy 4 as a partner."

-Ms. Cardenas, Pillow Elementary Principal

Renew Serve Day

On May 1st Academy 4 partner, The Hills Church, hosted Renew Serve Day at Western Hills Elementary and Mullendore Elementary. Academy 4 volunteers and staff spent the morning at the campuses cleaning, gardening, painting rooms, and organizing closets.



"Kids at that age [4th grade], their brains are still developing, there is so much molding that goes on. So good mentors and good role models...at that point, can really set the stage for that kid for the rest of their life."

-Dr. Ric Bonnell, Pediatrician, TCU and UNTHSC School of Medicine

A MENTOR'S STORY

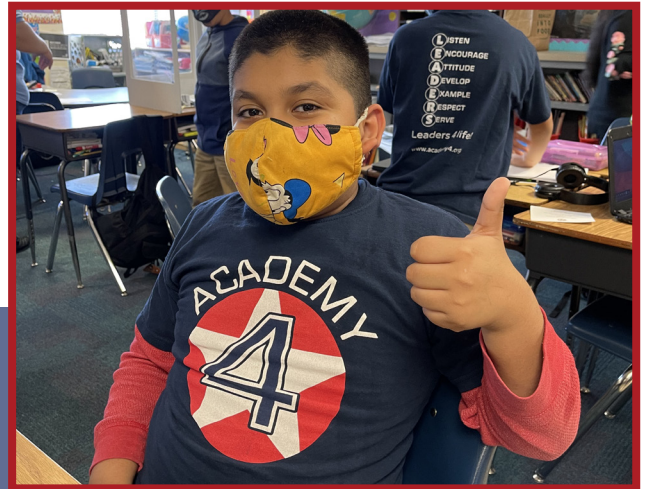
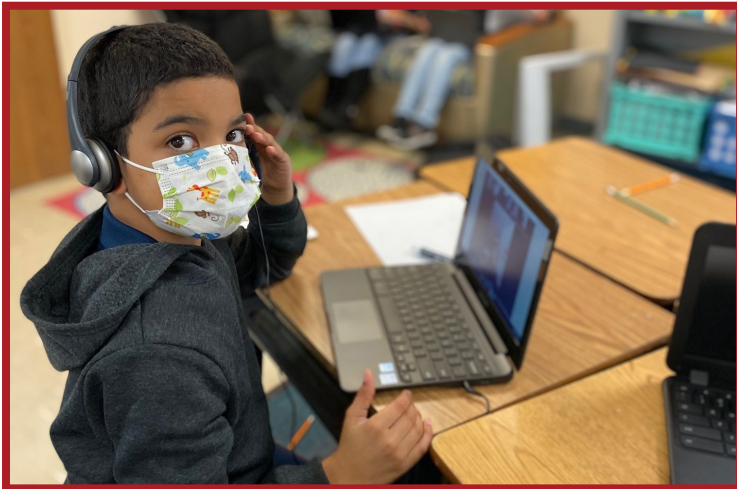
It was the first day of Academy 4. Chad was excited and ready, but anxious. Like many first-time mentors, Chad had several questions going through his head: would his 4th grader like him? Would they have much to talk about? And how in the world would he remain interesting the entire time? Luckily, today's leadership trait was Encourage.

Meanwhile, Chad's mentee, Hunter, was excited to experience his first Academy 4 Friday. He had heard so much about the program and how much fun he would have. Even so, just like Chad, Hunter was a bit anxious about meeting his mentor and how it might go. Little did Chad and Hunter know they were meant to connect.

As LEADERS Assembly ended and mentor time began, the pair began to make their way through their workbook together, and here came the question that made it all click: "When was a time you needed encouraging?" Chad thought for a minute and decided to take a risk and share something he had not shared with many people as an adult. He shared that he is dyslexic, and as a child, he struggled and needed a lot of encouragement from others. Immediately, Chad noticed Hunter's eyes lighting up on the screen. Hunter leaned forward and shared "I'm dyslexic too."

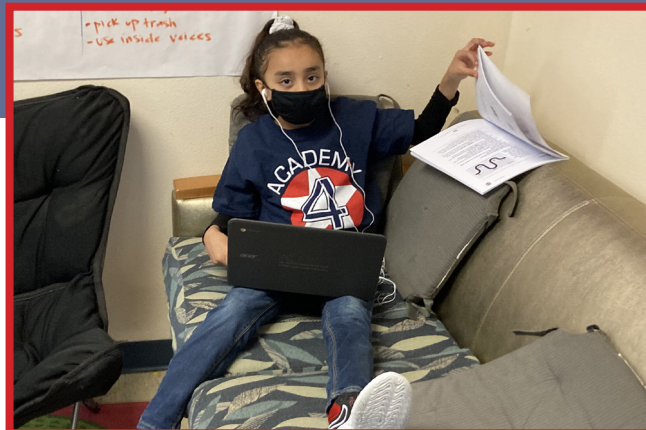
All apprehension melted away and the pair knew they were meant to be together this year! Chad began to share how encouragement helped him overcome his fears of being dyslexic and how taking advantage of various resources helped him. Hunter and Chad not only learned they shared a struggle in common, but they both walked away with changed lives, feeling encouraged and equipped to encourage others!

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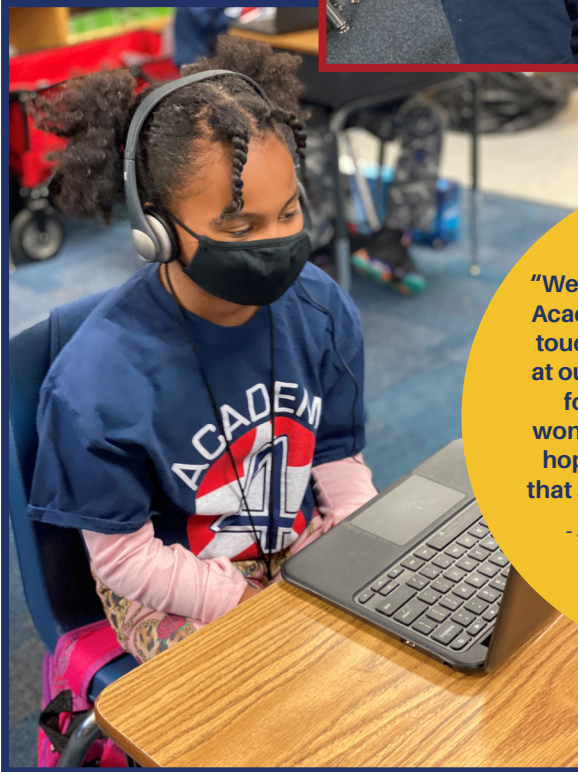
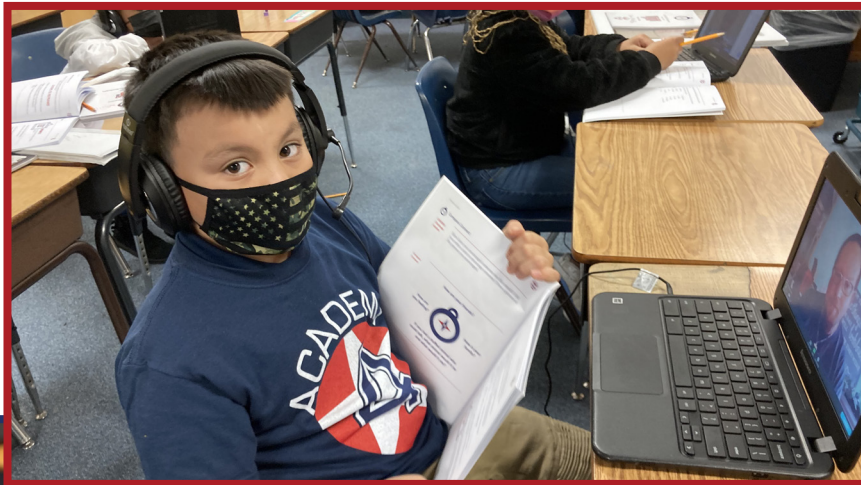
Did You Know?

In this year of our virtual mentoring, we had a TCU student mentor from her homeland of Spain!



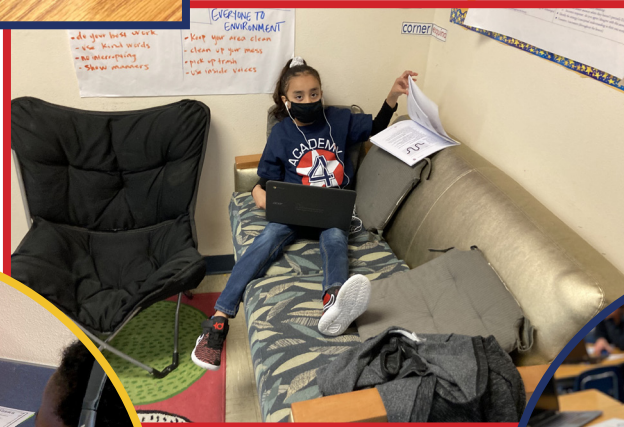
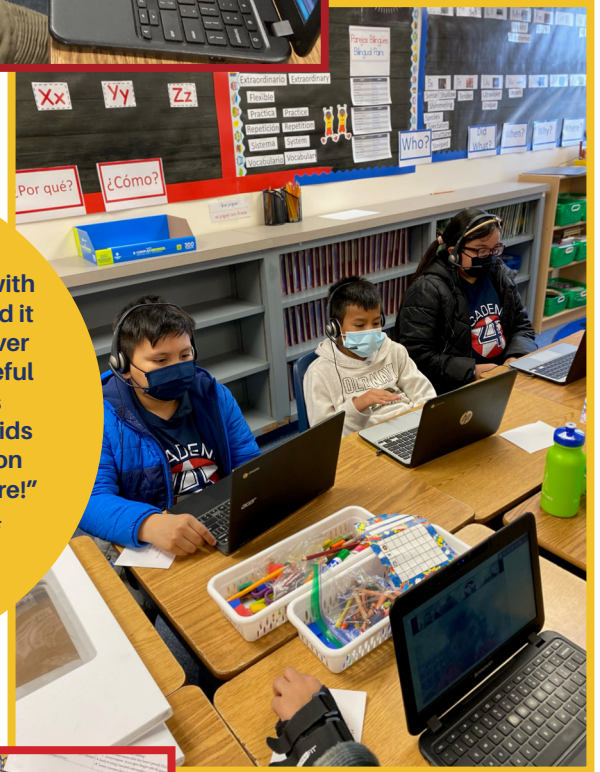
"[My mentor]... she is joyful, she inspires me, and she helps me be happy instead of being sad."

-Isabella, 4th Grader



"We are honored to partner with Academy 4 and have watched it touch hundreds of lives forever at our school. We are so grateful for those who support this wonderful cause that gives kids hope and an adult connection that speaks life into their future!"

- Sara Gillaspie, Principal of Westcliff Elementary



ACADEMY 4 ONLINE LUNCHEON

On April 28th, 300 of our closest friends joined us online for our 4th Annual Academy 4 Luncheon! It was a wonderful time of reflection and celebration, dedicated to the students and schools we serve, our partners, and some of the people who make Academy 4 truly special. The generosity of our community was on full display as supporters gave over \$50,000 in donations! This support is helping sustain our current operations and will help grow our mission into new schools next year.

After the Luncheon, we were blessed to hear the story of one of our volunteer mentors, who sadly lost her husband and another close friend to their battles with COVID-19. She shared that she was hesitant to volunteer with Academy 4 this year, feeling she didn't have much to give. But she persevered, faithfully choosing to serve each month where she joined fellow mentors and 4th graders on Zoom, laughing together, leading her mentee, and being encouraged by his spirit. In her season of grief and isolation, serving with Academy 4 brought her life-changing joy and comfort.



School and Church Partnerships

Clarke Elementary - University United Methodist Church
Daggett Elementary - St. Paul Lutheran Church
DeZavala Elementary - Southside Church of Christ
Donna Park Elementary - Crown of Life Lutheran Church
Leadership Academy at Como Elementary - West Mount Moriah Baptist Church
Newman International Academy - Grace Lutheran Church
Manuel Jara Elementary - Riverpoint Church
Cheney Hills Elementary - The Hills Church
Mullendore Elementary - The Hills Church
Rivertree Academy - The Hills Church
Westcliff Elementary - Arborlawn United Methodist Church
Western Hills Elementary (Black) - The Hills Church
Western Hills Elementary (Orange) - Birchman Baptist Church
West Handley Elementary - Bridgewood Church of Christ
Joslin Elementary - Woodlawn Baptist Church
Kocurek Elementary - Bethany Lutheran Church
Pillow Elementary - Westover Church of Christ
Wooten Elementary - Redeemer Lutheran Church

ACADEMY 4 FULL CIRCLE SCHOLARSHIP

Academy 4 reached a significant milestone this year! Four Fort Worth ISD high school seniors came full circle in our program. These four young women were part of the Academy 4 fourth grade class during the first year of the program in 2012-2013 at Daggett Elementary. Then, they chose to give back to Academy 4 by serving as mentors during their junior and senior years. With the help of generous donors, we awarded these high school seniors our very first Full Circle Scholarships of \$2,000 each.

Academy 4 congratulates Nicole Padron and Elodia Perez of Western Hills High School, and Joselin Pozos and Marilyn Pozos of Paschal High School. We are so proud of your leadership and perseverance and wish you all the best in your college careers!

"My experience as an Academy 4 mentor will help me in the future when it comes to learning how to communicate with others and being a good listener when it comes to others' opinions. In a way being an Academy 4 mentor assured me that I can be a good communicator and listener which is essential in my future career."

-Elodia Perez, Senior at Western Hills High School

Pictured: On the right is one of our scholarship recipients, Elodia Perez, who will be continuing her education at Boston College this fall.

Elodia Perez pictured with her 4th grade mentee Jacob for the 2019-2020 school year



Elodia Perez pictured with her mentor Ramona Eley in 2012



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