

Commit!

Working together to realize every student's full potential, cradle to career.

Newsletter Update - June 2012



Commit! is an independent, nonprofit entity supporting collective impact efforts to ensure that all students in Dallas County graduate and succeed in college and the global workforce.

Dear Friends,

School may be out for some, but we know that learning never stops. Thank you to all those working directly with our young people this summer in order to purposefully engage them and help prepare them for the school year ahead. Here at Commit!, we're on the brink of an exciting threshold as months of conversation are now being realized through partnerships. Dallas Independent School District has formally agreed to partner in the Commit! effort, several philanthropic leaders are answering the call, and collaboration within the early childhood community is firmly taking root.

We invite you to visit our recently updated [website](#) and welcome your involvement as we come together to support every child, every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Todd Williams

Executive Director, Commit!

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Progress Update



A quick glance at what we've been up to this month:

1. PARTNERING. Dallas Independent School District Board of Trustees approved an official [partnership agreement](#) with Commit!, becoming the first K-12 ISD in Dallas County to signal their participation. Serving more than 157,000 students, DISD represents 35% of the County's total K-12 student population. Uplift Education (8,000 students) also approved their commitment in June, and several districts, including Highland Park ISD and Grand Prairie ISD, have indicated that they will be bringing the Commit! initiative to their boards in either August or September.

In addition to school district partnerships, a number of local private and corporate foundations have communicated their support (both financial and strategic) to the Commit! effort. We are grateful to the following organizations who've made commitments over the past two months: **the Dallas Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, Bank of America, the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, Educate**

Texas, Texas Instruments Foundation, Citibank, and the Todd and Abby Williams Foundation.

2. COLLABORATING. Countywide enrollment in the State's [Kindergarten Readiness System \(KRS\)](#) continues to grow. In collaboration with **the Texas Workforce Commission, Childcare Group, Educational First Steps, Head Start of Greater Dallas, Region 10 ESC, and multiple ISDs**, we have continued our outreach efforts within the early childhood community and have seen the number of enrolled centers more than double over the past month. Please click [here](#) for a complete progress update on Dallas County KRS enrollment. We aim to have the highest participation rate in Texas and need your support leading up to the

July 31st deadline. Read below to participate in the most important volunteer opportunity of the summer! In the spirit of encouraging collaboration, Commit! also recently elected to work with the Strive organization and has entered into an agreement to become **an official member of the [Strive Network](#)**, leveraging off of best practices found within their network of 20+ communities across the U.S.

3. SUPPORTING. In June, the **Mayor's Intern Fellows Program** was launched through a partnership between **Bank of America, Commit!, Education Is Freedom, and the Mayor's Office**. Forty rising high school juniors and seniors have been placed in paid summer internship positions at 32 area nonprofits. Benefitting nonprofits include the Aberg Center for Literacy, Boys & Girls Club, Big Thought, Educational First Steps, Girls Inc., Jubilee Park & Community Center, LIFT, and KIPP DFW.

4. COMMUNICATING. In our quest to support existing networks and build a groundswell of community urgency, we met with several groups in June. We were honored to kick off [Literacy Speaks](#), a speaker series organized by Readers2Leaders, VMLC, and LIFT. We also appeared and contributed at the North Texas Children's Summit, the Dallas Contributor's Network, and the [U.S. STEM Solutions Youth Summit](#).

The Road Ahead

What's next on the horizon...

1. SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD. In July, we will ask early childhood stakeholders to complete a survey to help guide our work. Your input will be critical to our shared success! We will also push for increased enrollment in the KRS before we cross the July 31st finish line! In our quest to support preK providers, we are seeking tech-savvy volunteers to help licensed childcare providers enroll in KRS at a series of "Data Throw-Downs" on July 10-12 and July 24-26. Please contact info@commit2dallas.org for more info or click the "Get Involved" link below.

2. HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS. Issue the first in a series of case studies featuring success stories across Dallas County. We are actively seeking out practices, strategies, and partnerships that are leading to positive student results. Two case studies already underway examine school/business partnership created by both Fidelity Investments and Akin Gump with Marsh Middle School and Fannin Elementary. Please share what you see working by completing this [3-question anonymous survey](#).

3. GROWING PARTNERSHIPS. Pursue partnership agreements with various K-12 Districts and other entities in Dallas County. Throughout the summer months, we will continue to establish formal partnerships like the one recently agreed upon with Dallas ISD. These are meant to set shared expectations for promoting the effective use of data, identifying and sharing best practices, coordinating action along the cradle-to-career continuum, and providing input and support for prioritized areas of impact. Our goal is to create a partnership table that includes not only school districts but higher ed, business, civic, parent, teacher, nonprofit, and foundational entities as well.

Celebrating Collaborative Action

Commit! intends to lift up partnerships which use data-informed practices to drive improved results for students. If you know of another existing partnership or network that is using data-driven best practices, please share it with us.

[W.W. Samuell Early College High School](#)

WHAT: Set to open this fall, the W.W. Samuell Early College High School is a Dallas ISD high school at which participating students spend 9th and 10th grade on the Samuell campus and 11th and 12th grade on the Eastfield College campus. Students have the opportunity to earn up to 60 hours of free college credit and a high school diploma. DISD provides staff and facility renovations on the Samuell campus; Eastfield College offers professional development for teachers, student support, and dedicated space on their main campus; and Texas A&M Commerce provides scholarships for teachers to earn the appropriate master's degree required to teach dual credit courses.

ACADEMIC INDICATOR(S) IMPACTED: High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Enrollment, 1st Year Post-Secondary Retention, and Post-Secondary Graduation

RECENT ACTIVITIES: Open to all but with some eligibility criteria, the school has interviewed 130 students with 100% parental participation in the process. There are still approximately 20 slots left for incoming freshman. Interested parents and students can [get more information online](#) or contact Shanna Jones directly at shanjones@dallasisd.org or 972-892-5100. Meanwhile, 10 teachers are pursuing their required master's degrees this summer, and members of the Southeast Dallas Chambers of Commerce are already finding ways to support the initiative.



Get Involved

This month we feature three ways to get involved with Commit!

1. Tell us which areas along the cradle-to-career continuum we ought to focus on first in this 3-question [survey](#).

2. Tell us what you see working for Dallas County kids in this 3-question [survey](#).

3. Computer-savvy? If you feel comfortable using the web, you qualify! **We are seeking volunteers for**

Early Childhood Data Throw-Downs. Volunteers will provide basic technical assistance to early childhood providers in a computer lab setting as they register in the State's online Kindergarten Readiness System (KRS). Sessions will be held from 6-8 pm on the evenings of July 10, 11, 12, 24, 25, and 26 at two different locations. [Use this calendar to find a date and location that works for you.](#) When you register, just enter "Commit!" as the company name. Please email info@commit2dallas.org with any questions.



News and Resources



We're constantly on the look out for the most relevant local, state, and national news and events related to education and collective impact efforts. Please forward your recommendations to info@commit2dallas.org.

1. How are cities and school districts responding to state funding cuts to pre-K? [San Antonio considers a tax to support full-day pre-K.](#)

2. What makes a quality college-readiness counselor? [A recent paper](#) suggests that a common set of competences might be helpful.

3. Who is leading the early childhood movement across the country? [This article](#) features six trailblazers.

4. Why are there gender gaps in science and math? [New research](#) offers one explanation.

5. How can more citizens engage and drive local education policy? [A new start-up in Dallas launches a web platform to change that.](#)

6. How can we raise the bar for Latino/a students? In this [opinion piece](#), William McKenzie features one recent Sunset High graduate and offers up some ideas.

Finally, mark your calendars for these upcoming community events:

1. On October 3rd and 4th, UTD's Center for Children and Families will present its third annual forum, [Learning How to Learn: Promoting School Readiness and Academic Achievement](#), with keynote speaker Cybele Raver, Ph.D.

2. On October 19, Dallas Social Venture Partners will host its annual [bigBANG! event](#).