

Commit!

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

Newsletter Update - April 2012



Dear Friends,

Since our last communication, the Commit! team has remained hard at work on multiple fronts. We have continued engaging the community on the challenges facing our region while outlining numerous ways that working together can help meaningfully address them. Additional staff members have been hired and will start this summer with an initial focus on compiling effective best practices and sharing them among partners. Collaborative efforts are also being encouraged and supported where possible (more announcements to come on that front shortly). As always, we welcome your feedback and appreciate any support you can provide in spreading the word of Commit! and shifting the conversation in education from focusing on problems to identifying solutions.

Todd Williams

Executive Director, Commit!

Table of Contents

[Progress Update](#)

[The Road Ahead](#)

[Celebrating Collaborative Action](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[News and Resources](#)

Progress Update



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

- 1. Sharing and gathering input from the Commit! community:** On April 4, Commit! had the opportunity to present to the Dallas City Council. You can view [the presentation](#) here. We also attended [CitySquare's](#) Annual Urban Ministries Prayer Breakfast on April 12 and were honored to contribute to the panel that followed on the topic of poverty and education. The following day, we led a workshop on cradle to career strategies with the participants of [Leadership DISD](#). On April 20, we met with the faculty and staff of SMU's [Simmons School of Education and Human Development](#), followed by members of the Irving Community Action Network on April 23.
- 2. Partnering to grow Mayor Rawlings' Intern Fellowship Program:** Commit! has joined as a financial sponsor and partner with the Dallas Mayor's office, [Education is Freedom](#), and several Dallas County school districts to help meaningfully grow the [Mayor's Intern Fellowship Program](#). To date, the program has trained over 750 rising juniors and seniors living in the city of Dallas interested in gaining a summer internship experience to help bolster their college applications and give them more insight into a potential career. An initial job fair was conducted on April 4 with additional training and job fairs being planned.
- 3. Learning from others doing collective impact work:** On April 18, Commit! welcomed Jeff Edmondson from the [Strive Network](#) to Dallas. Drawing from his years of experience leading similar work, first in the greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region and now nationally, Jeff helped our team and potential Commit! supporters get a better understanding of collaborative action and how to navigate our next steps. If you're interested, check out [Jeff's TED talk](#) from 2010.
- 4. Learning from others to define Kindergarten readiness:** On April 17, the [E3 Alliance](#) of Central Texas

outlined the [Kindergarten Readiness results](#) from their fall 2011 assessment. Over 850 students in Central Texas were assessed using the Central Texas Guide to School Readiness (GSR). Overall, only 50% of all children were school-ready when they entered Kindergarten. Of low-income children who **did not** attend pre-K, only 19% were school-ready. The good news is that pre-K significantly improved outcomes for low-income children. Forty-two percent of low-income children attending some form of pre-K were school-ready. To see a more complete presentation of the findings, click [here](#).

The Road Ahead

What's next on the horizon ...

1. Participating in SMU's upcoming breakfast symposium entitled, "From Your Block to the Boardroom: Why Quality Education is Our Ethical Responsibility." You can check out the panelists and register for the May 7 event [here](#).



2. Hosting town hall meetings within two Dallas County districts. On May 24 from 7-8 pm, we will be in Irving ISD at Singley Academy. We are still finalizing the date, but we will be in Dallas ISD at 3700 Ross Avenue in late May/early June. Please visit our website for the latest news and updates.

3. Talking collective impact with Dallas Social Venture Partners. If "collective impact" is still a foreign concept, please take the time to read this [short article](#) that guides our approach. If you're still interested, join us on May 18 to discuss how this approach is impacting our region. More event info [here](#).

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 collaborative partnership or network that is using data-driven best practices, please email info@commit2dallas.org to share with us. Here we feature one example:

WHO: [Texas College Access Network \(TxCAN\)](#)

WHAT: TxCAN (pronounced TexCAN) is part of the National College Access Network (NCAN), created to establish a sustainable network of agencies and organizations working collaboratively to increase student access and success in postsecondary education. The Dallas/North Texas area is one of two regional pilots in the state which brings together institutions of higher education, school districts, school counselors, non-profit and for-profit college access service providers, and state agencies.

ACADEMIC INDICATOR(S) THEY HOPE TO IMPROVE: SAT/ACT entrance exam scores; college enrollment, persistence, and completion.

RECENT ACTIVITIES: Students who complete a financial aid application (such as FAFSA or TASFA) are significantly more likely to continue onto a postsecondary education. Yet many students and parents are not familiar with the process and need the guidance of a financial aid advisor to help them through the process. On March 24, the North Texas TxCAN Network held a FAFSA/TASFA "Super Saturday" workshop to provide students and families one-on-one help in completing tax returns, submitting FAFSA or TASFA applications and guidance on scholarship applications. The results: 270 students representing 20 different Dallas-area school districts attended, 250 parents attended, 70 volunteers representing more than 20 organizations assisted, and an estimated \$21,000 in college and university scholarships was awarded that day to students who attended with hopefully substantially more attained as a result of successfully completed financial aid applications.

Get Involved

Want to get involved? We welcome your [ideas](#) and encourage you to forward this update to friends and colleagues interested in education by simply clicking on the forward button at the top of this newsletter!



News and Resources



In our previous newsletter we asked you what kind of news you'd like us to include. Based on your replies, we'll do our best to share the most relevant local and State education news we can find.

1. Want to help reframe conversations about local education? Start with the numbers in William McKenzie's recent post, "[What Awaits Mike Miles](#)".
2. More local data to know and share around college-readiness and the achievement gap in "[By the Numbers: Few Black Students Leave DISD College- Ready.](#)"
3. Want to help 25 students studying Chinese at Thomas Jefferson High School take a language immersion course in China at a fraction of the cost? Check out [this editorial](#).
4. Debate rages about the State's next generation of K-12 math standards. Find out why in this recent [Texas Tribute piece](#).
5. Want to help build a college-going culture in your school, community, or workplace? Wear your college colors with pride on May 4! Learn more about GenTX Day [here](#).
6. It comes as no surprise that not every child starts school at the same level of preparedness. For some eye-opening national numbers on the problem, check out this Brookings Institute report titled "[Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children](#)".

[Forward this email](#)



This email was sent to jean.keller@unt.edu by info@commit2dallas.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).
Commit! | 3963 Maple, Suite 310 | Dallas | TX | 75219