My Brother’s Keeper: One Year Later

A City-wide Conversation about President Obama’s Initiative, My Brother’s Keeper

Tuesday, March 8, 2016
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Introduction

The Greater Austin Area MBK (GAAMBK) Initiative was launched in 2015 in response to President Barack Obama’s MBK Community Challenge, which called for all cities, Tribal Nations, towns, and counties to build and implement robust plans to ensure that all young people can achieve their full potential.

On March 8, 2016, the Greater Austin Area My Brother’s Keeper (GAAMBK) Initiative held its second annual Community Dialogue at SXSWedu. The event, co-sponsored by Austin Community College, Austin Independent School District, Huston-Tillotson University, the City of Austin, Travis County, the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and UT Austin, marked the end of a productive first year, which included the formal acceptance of the MBK Community Challenge by the city and county. Milestones included the establishment of six local priority areas and corresponding subcommittees, the creation of vision and mission statements, and a policy scan inclusive of best practices and local policy from across the nation.

Nearly 150 local educators, government officials, and community leaders participated in this year’s Community Dialogue, titled One Year Later. It featured remarks by Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt and Austin Mayor Steve Adler as well as a keynote address by Michael Smith, special assistant to President Obama and senior director of cabinet affairs for My Brother’s Keeper. Ken Harris also presented a blueprint for GAAMBK to continue its progress in the future.

The keynote was followed by a student panel discussion led by Austin Independent School District Superintendent Paul Cruz and remarks by Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo. The event was moderated by Dr. Leonard Moore, associate vice president of academic diversity initiatives at UT Austin. Welcome remarks and a year-one overview were provided by GAAMBK co-chairs Dr. Gregory Vincent, vice president for diversity and community engagement at UT Austin, and Mark Madrid, president and CEO of the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. See Appendix I for a complete overview of roundtable discussions.

As GAAMBK moves into its second year, it looks to complete data collection, establish further city and local partnerships and finalize its long-term strategic plan.

2015-16 Year in Review

In response to community feedback received at the inaugural SXSWedu Community Dialogue, the GAAMBK Initiative determined two major areas of focus for year one:

1. Form a regional task force with formal support from the city of Austin and Travis County
2. Establish a set of local priorities and objectives
It was therefore with great excitement that on August 17, 2015, a group of community leaders, including Dr. Vincent and Mr. Madrid, as well as Mayor Adler and Judge Eckhardt, gathered at the Austin Community College Highland Campus to announce the city and county’s formal support of the initiative.

Following that announcement, the GAAMBK Executive Committee was launched. It includes representatives from across the city and county, both public and private entities. The first task the committee undertook was the development of mission and vision statements:

- **Mission Statement**: To support males of color in reaching their full potential through solutions which eliminate disparities and create equity.
- **Vision Statement**: To become a national model for boosting academic achievement, enhancing health and well-being and elevating the lifetime prosperity for young boys and men of color.

Based upon feedback from the inaugural SXSWedu Community Dialogue, the Executive Committee also established six local MBK priority areas:

- Early childhood education and third-grade reading levels
- Middle school education initiatives
- High school college and career readiness
- Post-secondary education and workforce placement
- Healthcare equity
- Violence prevention and second chance programs

In 2015-16, the E3 Alliance was identified as GAAMBK’s data partner. E3 has been an invaluable partner in supplying cohort data for the subcommittees and providing an overview of data related to men and boys of color at the 2016 SXSWedu Community Dialogue. A website, www.gaambk.org, was also launched to house all relevant information, including information on all GAAMBK subcommittees.

**GAAMBK Executive Committee and Subcommittees**

The charge of the Executive Committee is to provide input to assist the GAAMBK Initiative in eliminating opportunity gaps, barriers, and challenges facing boys and young men of color in our community.

After thorough discussion, the Executive Committee created subcommittees to correspond with each of GAAMBK’s six priority areas, allowing members as well as interested parties outside of the Executive Committee to work in the area for which they are most passionate about. The first action of each subcommittee was to establish a unique set of target objectives.

**HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?**

- Please visit [www.gaambk.org](http://www.gaambk.org). If you would like to get involved, please sign up to be a task force member under the “get involved” link on the right-hand side of the home page.
- If you have any questions you can also email mbkaustin@utexas.com.
Committee Structure

With support from the E3 Alliance, each subcommittee has also focused on a set of objective data to identify the performance metrics for their area that will make the biggest difference in closing gaps for young men of color. As shown in Table 1, each metric is analyzed by gender, income level (low income or not) and ethnicity (Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) for a total of 16 total categories.

**TABLE 1. ANALYSIS FACTORS FOR EACH PERFORMANCE METRIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Asian American</td>
<td>Low-income Asian American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not low-income Asian American</td>
<td>Not low-income Asian American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Black</td>
<td>Low-income Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not low-income Black</td>
<td>Not low-income Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Hispanic</td>
<td>Low-income Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not low-income Hispanic</td>
<td>Not low-income Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income White</td>
<td>Low-income White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not low-income White</td>
<td>Not low-income White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the quantitative data in hand (see pages 6-10), each subcommittee has begun the qualitative process of reviewing and identifying the best practices behind local successes, building a regional action plan and identifying changes and support that the community could provide to improve areas most in need, i.e., what moves the needle and what factors most influence each metric.

The discussion for each priority area includes a table showing the metrics analyzed for that area. The metrics that have been identified as those which will make the biggest difference in closing the gaps are in bold type on each table. The disproportional difference is the percentage point difference between the target population (weighted average of Black and Hispanic low-income males) and the comparison population (White non-low income females). The greatest disproportional difference = the greatest gap.

Performance metrics for the Healthcare Equity and Violence Prevention and Second Chance Programs subcommittees must still be determined.
Early Childhood Education

Co-chairs: Patrick Patterson, DDCE assistant vice president, Longhorn Center for School Partnerships, UT Austin; and Albert Black, executive director, Child Inc.

Target Objectives:
- Provide newborn males of color in the greater Austin area with appropriate books to begin a private library
- Distribute and provide third-grade reading data to the public that is easily accessed
- Review educational requirements for successful teachers dealing with males of color

### TABLE 2. PERFORMANCE METRICS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Disproportional Difference*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent passed third-grade STAAR reading exam</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School readiness at the beginning of kindergarten—academic skills</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School readiness at beginning of kindergarten—social emotional skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent retained in first grade</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of eligible student enrolled in pre-K</td>
<td>-11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent chronically absent in pre-K</td>
<td>-12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The percentage point difference between the target population, weighted average of Black and Hispanic low income males and the comparison population, White, non-low income females.

**Passage rate of third-grade STAAR reading exam**
- The disproportional difference is the largest of all metrics and is a key “Student Success Indicator” outcome for students to proceed to higher grades.
- A student who can’t read on grade level by third grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19.
- Third-grade marks a time in learning spectrum where students shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”
- Metric also allows for comparison with eighth-grade reading, selected by the middle school education subcommittee.

**School readiness at the beginning of kindergarten—social emotional learning (SEL)**
- The disproportional difference is the third largest of all metrics and is considered highly predictive of later academic and non-academic outcomes.
- Strong SEL skills increase self-regulation and the ability to control and manage thoughts and strengthen students’ relationships with peers, teachers and parents.
- Strong SEL skills increase academic performance by more than 10 percent and are critical as students start to “learn how to learn.”
Middle School Education

Co-chairs: Teddy McDaniel III, president and CEO, Austin Area Urban League and Suki Steinhauser, CEO, Communities in Schools–Central Texas

**Target Objectives:**
- Encourage and support in and out of school/classroom
- Establish good attendance
- Promote healthy transitions between grades
- Develop career exposure practices
- Review educational requirements for successful teachers dealing with males of color

**TABLE 3. PERFORMANCE METRICS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Disproportional Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passage rate in eighth-grade STAAR reading exam</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary referrals–percentage &gt; zero</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement in Algebra 1 in eighth grade</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent retained in ninth grade</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student mobility</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent chronically absent</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic growth at sixth grade transition year</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary referrals–days missed</td>
<td>6% (of the school year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average daily attendance</td>
<td>2.1 days per student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Passage rate of eighth-grade STAAR reading exam**
- The disproportional difference is the largest of all metrics and is a key “Student Success Indicator” outcome for students to proceed to higher grades.
- This metric also allows for comparison with third-grade reading, selected by the early education subcommittee.

**Percent of students receiving at least one disciplinary referral**
- The disproportional difference is the second largest of all metrics.
- Disciplinary referrals are particularly important at the middle school level as rates are higher, and the gap is larger in middle school than in high school.
- There is a noted difference based on ethnicities; nearly half of low-income Black males are referred at least once.
High School, College and Career Readiness

Co-chairs: Dr. Victor Saenz, executive director, Project MALES & Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color, associate professor, UT Austin; and Sonia Dominguez, administrative supervisor, Teaching and Learning Community, Austin ISD

Target Objectives:
• Ensure alignment with state policy
• Analyze key metrics for college readiness
• Analyze current high school programs

TABLE 4. PERFORMANCE METRICS FOR HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGES AND CAREER READINESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Disproportional Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passing rate in English II EOC exam</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students completing pre-calculus or higher</td>
<td><strong>37.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education enrollment</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students taking at least one AP/IB course</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary referrals—percentage ≥1</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation rate</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent chronically absent</td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent retained in ninth grade</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students taking at least one dual credit course</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of CTE coursework</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of students completing pre-calculus or higher
• The disproportional difference is the second largest of all metrics.
• Research indicates that students who pass pre-calculus have a much higher probability (46%) of completing a post-secondary credential, as compared to students who complete just Algebra II (21%).
• Because strong literacy skills are required to access higher level math information, this effectively incorporates literacy competency as well.
• The percentage of students completing pre-calculus can be impacted relatively easily with changes to policy and practice (e.g., course assignment practices, training on importance of taking advanced classes).

Percent of students chronically absent (missing 10% or more for any reason)
• Although disproportional difference ranks seventh, target groups have two-and-a-half times higher rate of chronic absences.
• Chronic absence is a strong predictor of student achievement and life outcomes. Chronically absent ninth graders are 10 times more likely to not graduate on time compared to students who miss five or less days.
• Nearly 70% of chronically absent students in Central Texas are from low-income backgrounds.
• Research indicates that chronic absence behavior can be changed for many students.
Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Placement

Co-chairs: Dr. Colette Pierce Burnette, president, Huston-Tillotson University; and Dr. Richard Armenta, associate vice president for Student Success, Austin Community College

Target Objectives:

- Develop asset mapping on various service providers highlighting best practices
- Strengthen shared roles as outcome of asset mapping
- Get men of color to college, graduated and place them in Austin
- Work closely with high school, college and career readiness subcommittee in order to create synergy in the transition from high school graduation to post-secondary or initial workforce placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Disproportional Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent completed a degree or certification within six years of enrollment</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent enrolled full-time versus part-time</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education enrollment (males of color)</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent transferred from two to four-year institution</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent continuously enrolled (for six years following enrollment)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent completed a STEM degree or certificate within six years of enrollment</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent employed in the technology sector one year after degree completion</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent employed one year after degree completion</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of males of color enrolling in institutions of higher education

- The disproportional difference ranks a close third of all metrics.
- It is an important leading indicator—students can’t complete a degree if they never enroll.
- Builds on many current initiatives that help students with application and admission processes, accessing of financial aid, etc.

Persistence of students passing and completing year two (not an analyzed metric)

- This metric is closely linked to higher education completion, but also allows for more immediate tracking of regional progress.
- Research indicates that the largest fall out of higher ed students is between the first and second year.
- The metric aligns closely with the Austin College Access Network Regional College Persistence Plan.
Healthcare Equity

Co-chairs: Dr. Leonard Moore, associate vice president for Academic Diversity Initiatives and professor of History, UT Austin; and Sherrie Fleming, county executive, Health and Human Services, Travis County

**Target Objectives:**

- Increase access for males of color
- Increase access to recreational opportunities
- Better understanding of the experience of males of color around health
- Train healthcare workers on issues impacting males of color
- Highlight mental health treatment programs
- Highlight substance abuse services

Violence Prevention and Second Chance Programs

Co-chairs: Keivon Liburd, area athletic coordinator, Austin ISD; and Dr. Emmet Campos, director of Project MALES and the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color, UT Austin

**Target Objectives:**

- Identify available resources
- Coordinate mentorship groups
- Attend school activities
- Secure student testimonials
- Collect data for asset identification
Next Steps

This year’s SXSWedu Community Dialogue demonstrated that GAAMBK has the full backing of both the city and county as well as hundreds of civic leaders who are dedicated to improving the lives of boys and young men of color. The opportunity to make our goals a reality exists.

As Mayor Adler said at the SXSWedu Community Dialogue, he hoped that this year’s gathering was “one year before we gather and we no longer are talking about ideas, but about what we have accomplished.”

At the initiative-wide level, the major push for 2016-17 will be the establishment and completion of the strategic plan. This will include the following major goals:

• Review and discuss subcommittee performance metric data with school systems and community organizations to determine best practices and ways to improve the disproportionality

• Identify and align with existing community organizations within the region that can assist with pilot programs (i.e. the best practices) in the schools needing assistance to close achievement gaps

• Monitor impact of the pilot programs and move to additional schools when successful

• Meet with the community and align with existing organizations to leverage opportunities to inform parents, students and businesses. This will include sharing best practices and providing opportunities for community and civic involvement

• Develop and implement a business model to sustain the momentum of the initiative, which includes organizational structure and level of independence from any one entity

Additional goals for 2016-17 include:

• Develop funding streams to facilitate the work of GAAMBK

• Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the volunteer network

• Implement communication and branding strategy around measured results

2016-17 GAAMBK Objective Timeline:
Appendix I: SXSWedu Community Dialogue
Roundtable Discussions

All involved in the SXSWedu Community Dialogue event were asked to discuss two wide-ranging questions in roundtable discussions. Prevalent themes and recommendations from the discussions are listed below and will be used to help guide the GAAMBK Task Force over the next year.

**Question 1**
Of these local priorities, can you prioritize these objectives (1-6)? What issues relevant to Austin’s young men of color are missing from this list? (ranking reflects Community Dialogue input)

1. Ensuring all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally ready and ensuring all children read at grade-level by the third grade
2. Ensuring that violence to and by males of color is prevented in our local community and increasing opportunities to assist second chances for males of color
3. Ensuring all males of color are afforded equitable access to healthcare
4. Ensuring all middle school children have personal and professional development and are afforded the opportunity to be STEM-, AP-, and Honors-ready by the 8th grade
5. Ensuring all youth graduate from high school and are college and career read
6. Ensuring all youth complete post-secondary education or training and ensuring all youth out of school are employed

**Question 1B**
What issues relevant to Austin’s young men of color are missing from this list?

Sampling of responses (Not ranked in order of importance):

- Ensuring all youth show respect for women
- Ensuring local schools have resources to handle discipline issues with means beyond suspension
- Ensuring all youth have opportunity to participate in wrap-around services (after school and summer) and/or have access to mentoring programs
- Ensuring there youth have access to programs that address teen pregnancy and fatherhood
- Ensuring that all families have assistance in navigating the college application process and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms
- Ensuring that all youth have access to funding for college
- Ensuring that all youth have access to financial literacy programing and understand the role of money and credit
- Ensuring that all youth have safe school environments and safe routes to school
Question 2
What are promising programs and initiatives of your organization (or others) that currently support boys and young men of color in Austin?

Sampling of responses (Not ranked in order of importance):
• Get Ready! (summer internship program)
• Communities in School–XY Zone
• Austin Area Urban League
• Project Males (UT Austin)
• Americorps (AISD)
• African American Male Research Initiative (UT Austin)
• Travis County Community Centers
• Travis County Summer Youth Employment Program
• AMP360
• Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
• Omega Psi Phi
• Seedling Foundation
• 100 Black Men
• Austin Community College Male Leadership Program
• Boys and Girls Clubs of Austin
• YMCA of Austin

Question 3
What obstacles do you foresee in aligning all local programs and resources under the MBK umbrella in attacking the outlined priorities?

Sampling of responses (Not ranked in order of importance):
• A commitment to organization
• Eliminating redundancy
• Open communication and collaboration
• Competition from different local agencies – favoring their programs over others
• Engagement from parents
• Too many ideas without the financial investment
• Identifying schools and communities of greatest need
• Sustainable funding infrastructure to keep GAAMBK running long-term
• Leadership changes at national and local level
• Bias against supporting only male of color programs
Question 4
What are recommendations to overcoming those (Question 3) obstacles?

Sampling of responses (Not ranked in order of importance):
- Make sure that goals and metrics are shared
- Have an awareness of the big picture
- Fund a small staff to support GAAMBK work
- Communication at all levels
- Define GAAMBK structure to facilitate work and fundraising
- Convene providers in order to share best practices and leverage resources

Question 5
What are some actionable ideas which the Greater Austin Area My Brother’s Keeper Initiative can produce over the next year?

Sampling of responses (Not ranked in order of importance):
- Get more people involved (the right people)
- Start where there is the highest need
- Address disparities in discipline between schools
- Create an alliance of providers serving males of color to share best practices
- Identify funding structure