



**My** BROTHER'S KEEPER

GREATER AUSTIN AREA

A Report by the Post-Secondary Education &  
Workforce Placement Committee

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**CENTRAL TEXAS  
BRIGHT SPOTS**

How Four Local High Schools Send a Greater Number of  
Latino and African-American Students to College

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**Dr. Richard R. Armenta** Chair, Associate Vice President, Student Engagement & Success, Austin Community College District

**Dr. Colette Burnette** Co-Chair, President and CEO, Huston-Tillotson University

**Raul Alvarez** Executive Director, Community Action Network

**Dr. Chiquita W. Eugene** Administrator, AmeriCorps VISTA Project Director, City of Austin

**Laura E. Brady** Director, Austin Opportunity Youth Collaborative

**Geronimo Rodriguez, Jr.** Chief Advocacy Officer, Ascension Texas/Seton Healthcare Family/Providence Waco

**Gigi Edwards Bryant** Board of Trustees Member, Austin Community College District

**Jarrell McCullar** Supervisor, Male Leadership Program, Austin Community College District

**Karl Nichols** Vice President, Investor Development, E3 Alliance

**Kristin Boyer** Director of Philanthropy, TG

**Johnny Hill** Academic Advisor, Department of Civil, Architectural and Environmental Engineering, The University of Texas at Austin

**Navid Ladha** Education Engagement Manager, The New York Times Company

## Executive Summary

### How Four Local High Schools Send a Greater Number Of Latino and African American Students to College

In the summer and fall of 2016, the Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Placement Committee of the Greater Austin Area My Brother's Keeper (GAAMBK) Initiative reviewed 2014 data supplied by E3 Alliance regarding graduation and high school student to college enrollment rates. That data identified numerous high schools throughout Central Texas with successful track records of graduating their low income African American and Latino male students and sending them to college. In regard to these efforts, four area high schools were deemed as "bright spots" or high achievers in this category even when controlled for poverty and socio-economic levels. In other words, the percent of students from these four high schools who are going to college still exceeded the percent of their peer high schools despite low income levels represented in their populations. This observation caused the committee to ask what practices at these campuses might be responsible for this level of success and to see how these practices might be shared with other schools, parents, and the public. The high schools sharing the limelight in terms of this outstanding success included:

- Akins High School, Austin ISD
- Travis High School, Austin ISD
- Manor High School, Manor ISD
- KIPP Austin Collegiate

Interviews of the various representatives from each of the high schools identified four characteristics that define the type of climate seen as responsible for helping Latino and African-American males succeed in their high school experience.

#### Climate Factors:

- Relationship/communication between and among faculty, staff, students and parents
- Commitment to the goal of graduation and enrollment in college
- Timely Intervention by high school employees
- Teamwork among all employees on campus

## **How Four Local High Schools Send a Greater Number Of Latino and African-American Students to College**

The Central Texas six-county area population consists of 1.9 million residents: 52.91 percent White, 32.95 percent Latino, 6.81 percent African American, 4.98 percent Asian and the remaining 2.35 percent represent other races and ethnicities<sup>1</sup>. E3 Alliance<sup>2</sup> reports that enrollment in higher education by low income, African American and Latino males falls behind non-low income white females at a combined disproportionality rate of nearly 30 percent. This alarming equity gap is twice that seen in high school graduation rates, indicating that while our region has made great strides in helping our young men of color graduate high school, they are far too rarely taking that critical next step to matriculate into college. In recognition of this issue, the Greater Austin Area My Brother's Keeper (GAAMBK) Initiative, Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Placement Committee held several meetings in the quest to implement its charge of getting more African American and Latino Males to college. Discussion by the committee led to the conclusion that first there needed to be a review of data from local high schools regarding graduation rates. This was viewed as essential to improving the rate of college enrollment. More students graduating from high school translates into more students going to college. The information, data and assistance from E3 Alliance helped the committee determine which high schools were most successful in getting their students to college and served as a starting point for the committee's investigation of what efforts undertaken by those high schools could be seen as effective practices – and worthy of sharing.

### Framing the Question

In the summer and fall of 2016, the Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Placement Committee of the GAAMBK Initiative reviewed 2014 data supplied by E3 Alliance regarding graduation and high school student to college enrollment rates. That data identified numerous high schools throughout Central Texas with successful track records of graduating their low income African American and Latino males and sending them to college. In regard to these efforts, four area high schools were deemed as “bright spots” or high achievers in this category even when controlled for poverty and socio-economic levels. In other words, the percent of low income African American and Latino males from these four high schools who are going to college exceeded the percent of their peer high schools despite the high poverty levels represented in their populations. This observation caused the committee to ask what practices at these campuses might be responsible for this level of success and to see how these practices might be shared with other schools, parents, and the public. The high schools sharing the limelight in terms of this outstanding success included:

- Akins High School, Austin ISD
- Travis High School, Austin ISD
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<sup>1</sup> Source: Austin Community College Factbook, 2015-2017, Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer.

<sup>2</sup> Source: E3 Alliance, 2014 Bright Spots Data

## Addressing the Question

The committee members agreed to address the central question of:

What processes or procedures at these high schools contribute to a climate that may be responsible for having a high percentage of minority students go to college; specifically African American and Latino males?

To get answers, the committee posed a series of questions to the academic leaders from each of the campuses. Those leaders were identified by the administration of each district and high school, and were asked to participate in a one-hour live video Q&A sessions in front of a panel composed of members from the committee. The predetermined questions (see Appendix) as developed by the committee were shared with the respondents a few days prior to the live interview. Responses to the questions by each of the high school representatives were documented on video and archived on written transcripts.

## Results

To get an idea of the relative size of each school, the following table is a ranking by number of graduates from each high school and for which 65% or more of their population represents low income African American and Latino students, according to E3 Alliance.

<b>High School</b>	<b>Number of Graduates</b>	<b>Number of Low Income African American &amp; Latino Graduates (Male and Female)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Akins	397	278	70.0
Travis	172	153	88.9
Manor	217	170	78.3
KIPP Austin Collegiate	46	43	93.4

Analysis of the written transcripts of interviews from the respective high school representatives provided several revelations.

### *College Going Culture*

It is clear that all of the high schools are creating a climate that emphasizes a “college going culture” characterized by a very supportive environment. While some staff members are charged with the responsibility of getting students to college, all staff and faculty appear focused in solidarity in cooperating with each other to achieve the students goal to graduate and attend college. A comradery appears to exist among all employee groups of the schools united by a commitment to this sense of purpose.

### *Strong Communication and Intervention*

Established communication systems permit quick intervention when a student falters. For all of the schools, the primary methods to track student success and performance are attendance and grades. At all of the schools, someone (faculty member or staff) contacts students if they fail to attend class or report the lack of attendance to someone who can contact the student immediately. Two of the schools use assigned mentors from the school or community as a means to follow-up and encourage or connect with students. Even if a student comes to school but appears disinterested or distracted, there is cause for concern that triggers intervention.

### *Purposeful Relationship Building*

Another finding is that all of the high schools conscientiously work to build relationships with the student, among the staff/faculty and with parents. Each school works with parents differently. Common strategies include invitations to visit the campus, parent conferences and workshops and direct communication such as texts and email.

### *The Power of Teamwork*

The most dominant observation is that each school understands its mission, accepts it, and is committed to its delivery; namely, to close the achievement gap and graduate their students, with an inherent commitment that they go to college or some form of post-secondary education. While it seems simple enough, it cannot be accomplished without a degree of teamwork. That teamwork rests on building relationships, among the employees and with the students/parents. The school knows their students and the students know that the school cares about them.

### Concluding Statement

In conclusion, the following four characteristics define the type of climate seen as responsible for helping Latino and African American males succeed in their high school to college experience.

#### Climate Factors

- Relationship/Communication between and among faculty, staff, students and parents
- Commitment to the goal of graduation and enrollment in college
- Timely Intervention by high school employees
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The GAAMBK Committee on Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Placement has found the results of this study meaningful and potentially worthwhile to share with other high schools, ISD's and the various communities within the area. The committee also affirms that it is possible to achieve high levels of success by Latino and African American students, particularly males. Indeed, these "bright spot" schools achieved college enrollment of their low income African American and Latino males at about twice the rate of other schools in the region with similar demographics. If success is possible among schools with the highest number of African American and Latino students who are also from neighborhoods that are among the poorest,

then hope exists that similar outcomes can be achieved from replication of these models throughout Central Texas.

### Acknowledgments

**Akins High School**, 10701 S. 1ST St., Austin, TX 78748

Dr. Paul Cruz, Superintendent, Austin ISD

Brandi Hosak, Principal

Kristine Salazar, Asst. Principal, Social Services Academy

Sarah Simmons, College & Career Advisor

**KIPP Austin Collegiate**, 8004 Cameron Rd., Austin TX 78754

Anthony Salerno, Director K through College

Hector Leiva, Jr., Communication Manager

**Manor High School**, 12700 Gregg Manor, Manor, TX 78653

Dr. Royce Avery, Superintendent, Manor ISD

Dr. Keith Brooks, Principal

**Travis High School**, 1211 E. Oltorf St., Austin, TX 78704

Dr. Paul Cruz, Superintendent, Austin ISD

Ty Davidson, Principal

Jessica Enyioha, Professional Cent. Specialist

Kori Crawford, Academy Director

### **E3 Alliance**

Susan Dawson, President & Executive Director, E3 Alliance

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Dr Richard M. Rhodes, President & CEO

Dr. Charles Cook, Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Virginia Fraire, Vice President Student Services

**Michael Baima**, MPA, Researcher and Policy Data Analyst

## APPENDIX

Suggested Questions for Travis and Akins Interviews  
Manor and KIPP Interviews  
GAAMBK Post-Secondary Committee  
October 25 and November 30, 2016

1. Name three (3) things that accounts for your success in getting more males of color to enroll in higher education.
2. Who (by title) and how many staff members are in charge of seeing to the in-reach of these students?
3. How many male students are served and how are they identified?
4. What three (3) performance tracking steps does the staff conduct that you find most effective: Attendance?, Grades?, Disciplinary referrals? Counseling? FAFSA workshops, Curriculum/Advising, Cohort grouping, Other?
5. Do you offer any associated faculty or staff development/training related to the program?
6. How is participation in Early College High School affecting the numbers?
7. How are parents involved in the program?
8. Name three (3) socio-climate factors your program seeks to impact: dress code, leadership, faculty-student interactions, faculty, staff or peer mentoring, other?
9. Name three (3) greatest outcomes.
10. Other?