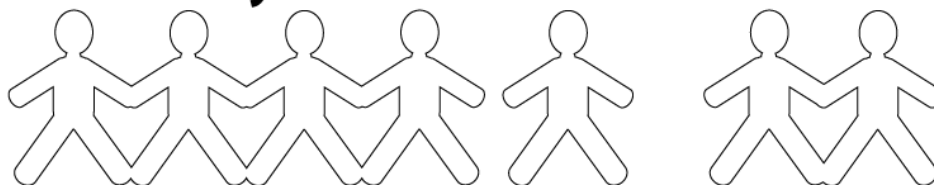


Too Many Children Left Behind



Closing the Education Gaps in Central Texas

E³ Alliance, in partnership with **Austin Voices for Youth in Education** and **Texas Forums** (LBJ Presidential Library), will host deliberative dialogues in seven communities across Central Texas about the achievement gaps in education. We are creating a Regional Blueprint for Change in Education. These discussions will bring people together to create a common action plan for closing the achievement gaps in education that will help to drive that blueprint.

The goals of these dialogues are to:

- Draft a plan to close achievement gaps locally as well as regionally;
- Create a basis for regional consensus on over-arching educational system goals and;
- Strengthen the capacity for communities to engage in *deliberative* forums on education policy and to move from individual opinions to reasoned public judgment that supports systemic change.
- Provide the public, experts and policy-makers with the information needed to decide on education policy and goals.

The dialogues will provide us with:

- Tangible approaches for addressing achievement gaps;
- Pros and cons and possible unintended consequences of certain approaches;
- Basis for an action plan.

Dialogue Structure

The Deliberative Dialogues will take place in September- early October. These dialogues use a *defined, mediated process* that is designed to expose common values and generate some consensus among participants with very different backgrounds. It is vital that the public have an opportunity to participate in a dialogue about education and the existing achievement gap for the following reasons:

- Decisions about education in Central Texas will not be easy, and policy implementation will require broad support. There is no single point of authority. Resources are limited; the public must decide how to set priorities.
- The goal of public forums is to help the public move from individual opinions to sound and reasoned public judgment about what should and *could* be done based on shared values and priorities.
- The public must make decisions together about how they can work together to solve the complex problems confronting our education system. To move from “my child” to “all of our children,” we must expose common values and understand common benefits.

Following the dialogues in each of the seven communities, we will host a Regional Forum that will bring together representatives from each target community to work with regional “thought leaders” to share findings from local dialogues and identify regional priorities, themes, and recommended actions. Prioritized activities will then be fed back to local communities to be used as the basis for action in addressing community and regional education needs.

