

Austin-American Statesman

Austin ISD joins President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative

By [Melissa B. Taboada](#)

American-Statesman Staff

The Austin school district is among 60 school districts that will announce today they will join President Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative to help Hispanic and African-American youth.

Austin school district Interim Superintendent Paul Cruz will join Obama in Washington, D.C. this morning for a town hall. The town hall will be live streamed at 10:45 a.m. at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/live>.

The 5-year, \$200 million initiative, announced in February, is aimed at addressing academic and opportunity gaps for young men of color. The program, coordinated by the Council of Great City Schools, will work to ensure children are school-ready entering kindergarten, are at reading level by age 8, and graduate high school as college- and career-ready, among other goals.

Across the nation, Hispanic and African-American students academically lag behind their white counterparts in graduation rates and test scores. Hispanic and African-American students, particularly boys, also are removed from the classroom for disciplinary reasons at much higher rates. Black students across the country are more than three times as likely as their white peers to be expelled or suspended, according to federal Office of Civil Rights data.

The Austin school district has shown the same gaps, but has made improvements in both areas in recent years.

The district has improved graduate rates by several percentage points since the late 2000s in among Hispanic and African-Americans; however, those students continue to graduate at a lower rate than their peers statewide.

Discretionary removals also dropped by 60 percent, while overall disciplinary action decreased by a third, from 2010 to 2012, according to school district officials.