



**Dallas Independent School District**



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **DALLAS ISD KICKS OFF AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE SUCCESS INITIATIVE**

*Earth Day Dallas to sponsor initiative to eliminate achievement gaps among students*

DALLAS—The Dallas Independent School District's first African American Female Success Initiative kicks off Saturday, Oct. 29, with an event at The Black Academy of Arts and Letters (TBAAL) beginning at 9 a.m. One of the only initiatives of its kind in the country, the program hopes to empower young African American females in Dallas through education, mentoring and enrichment opportunities.

Modeled after Dallas ISD's earlier African American Male Success Initiative, the new female-focused task force was created this year to help eliminate the social, emotional and academic achievement gaps affecting Dallas ISD students. While African American students in Dallas ISD are improving academically, many are not accelerating at the same pace as other student groups. According to recent standardized test scores, African American females lag behind some other student groups in mathematics and science.

The initiative is being underwritten by Earth Day Dallas ([EarthDayDallas.org](http://EarthDayDallas.org)), which got involved to promote academic success while bringing environmental awareness to students. Students participating in the initiative will have the opportunity to showcase their efforts and program highlights over the year at Earth Day Dallas' 2012 festival in April.

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“We are proud to partner with Earth Day Dallas for this event,” said Interim Superintendent of Schools Alan King. “As educators, we must continue to adjust to the changing needs of our students as we work to educate them for success. Having this many young girls come together to share their voices and to affirm their ability to succeed is a worthwhile effort, and hopefully, it will further the success we’re starting to see in the classroom.”

The African American Female Success Initiative combines mentoring with supplemental activities to help students build a positive future. While the program targets African American girls, it is open to all female students in fourth through 12th grade and places participants with a designated mentor at each school. Throughout the year, mentors will meet periodically with the young girls to support their academic, social, cultural and emotional growth. Together, mentors and students will participate in a number of activities including community service projects, trips to colleges, museums and plays.

“We are excited for our female students, and we are grateful to have Earth Day Dallas’ support,” said Shirley Ison-Newsome, interim Elementary Schools’ Division Executive and co-chair of the district’s African American Success Initiative. “This initiative is an excellent opportunity to truly impact the lives of our young girls in the classroom and beyond. We are committed to the academic success of all students, and it is our responsibility as a district to do everything possible to reach every student and to engage with partners outside the district to do so.”

Serving as the initiative’s first event, the gathering will feature inspirational guest speaker Ocielgia Gibson, the current Miss Black USA. In her role as Miss Black USA, Gibson speaks to thousands of young women nationwide about leadership and self-esteem. The Dallas native is also a member of the African American Female Success Initiative task force and will bring her message home Saturday, as participants are given the chance to ask her questions following her speech.

“Earth Day Dallas is proud to partner with Dallas ISD for the inaugural African American Female Success Initiative launch,” Susan Walton Brosin, Earth Day Dallas Director, said. “Educating North Texas—youth and adults alike—is a fundamental reason our organization and the festival exists.”

For more information about Earth Day Dallas, please visit [EarthDayDallas.org](http://EarthDayDallas.org).

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**About Earth Day Dallas**

The second-annual Earth Day Dallas begins April 21, 2012, with a two-day festival in Fair Park. Events will focus on entertaining, inspiring and educating Dallasites with various ways to think, work and live green by showcasing emerging green technology, providing eco-friendly family activities, presenting enlightening lectures from environmental leaders, a variety of music and much more. Find out more at [EarthDayDallas.org](http://EarthDayDallas.org), follow us at @EarthDayDallas or check out our Facebook page.

**About Dallas ISD**

*Four Dallas ISD schools were named 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.*