



U2L Liaison VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR

Who We Are

[United to Learn](#) (U2L) is a Dallas-based education nonprofit with a stated mission of changing lives by transforming the relationship between schools and community. United to Learn is focused on accelerating student achievement across 49 Dallas ISD elementary schools, and growing purposeful leaders through partnerships with businesses, high schools, colleges, faith-based organizations, and engaged individuals and groups. Together we work to create a united, thriving community.

What We Believe

Our values underpin everything we do. Together we aim to be:

- **Optimistic:** We believe that with the right resources all children can achieve greatness
- **Nimble:** We respond flexibly and creatively through active listening
- **Culturally Competent:** We build a positive understanding of diverse perspectives
- **Collaborative:** We respectfully and empathetically work to learn from each other and build coalitions
- **Effective:** We use evidence-based practices for high-impact results

How We Work

These are the four main avenues by which we operate and affect real change in our area schools.

- **Social and Emotional Health:** Improving the wellbeing of students and educational staff.
- **Learning Environments:** Fostering positive aspirational school settings.
- **Literacy Achievement:** Accelerating students reading on grade level by third grade.
- **Community Activation:** Equipping communities to advocate for educational equity from a culturally competent perspective.

Become a School Liaison with United to Learn!

Named to honor the enduring legacy of our visionary thought partner, the [Serena Connelly U2L Liaisons](#) are a central component of our collaborative model. **As the primary relationship manager** between United to Learn and an elementary campus partner, the School Liaison develops strong relationships with campus leadership. This relationship creates the framework within which our community can unite and engage in effective programming to help realize the vision of accelerating student achievement and developing purposeful leaders. Through their relationship and consistent communication with campus representatives, **U2L Liaisons come to appreciate the unique needs of their campus, facilitate meaningful partnerships with private community partners, leverage the resources secured by the United to Learn network and advocate for their campus in the larger community.** As a result, School Liaisons emerge as knowledgeable and purposeful leaders in public education advocacy.

Reporting Structure

U2L Liaisons report to and work closely with the Liaison Manager. In serving as a critical thought partner to their U2L School, **Liaisons** communicate regularly with school principals and key team members. This group of volunteers have the unique opportunity to close communication and resource gaps for their U2L School by sending updates to and collaborating with the Liaison Manager through digital platforms and in-person meetings.

Essential Responsibilities

Cultivate Relationships

- Build rapport with elementary campus principals and key team members.
- Serve as a thought-partner to elementary campus leadership.
- Engage with community partners.
- Host school and community partners at U2L Conferences, Summits, and Celebrations.

Serve as a United to Learn Representative

- Lead quarterly check-in meetings with your U2L School's principal.
- Serve as a member of the Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) Committee at your U2L School.
- Serve as the site-lead for your U2L School's Community Campus Day (CCD). Participate in site visits for Community Campus Day.
- Serve as a co-lead for other U2L programs, as needed.

Develop Leadership Competencies

- Attend key U2L Liaison meetings and events (i.e. orientation, quarterly meetings, and virtual workshops).
- Consider professional development and networking opportunities offered throughout the school year by United to Learn and/or Dallas ISD.
- Work closely with the Liaison Manager to leverage knowledge of current United to Learn programming and initiatives.

Activate Community

- Engage and educate personal networks in the work of Dallas ISD and greater public school community.
- Develop collaborative relationships with fellow U2L Liaisons.
- Attend partner kickoff meetings.

Bridge Resource Gaps

- Identify and understand campus goals and changing needs.
- Support principals and teachers through your work as a U2L Liaison.
- Connect your campus with U2L programs and initiatives that can best meet their current needs.
- Gather feedback, evaluate progress, and communicate updates about your U2L School to the Liaison Manager.

The ideal **U2L Liaison** aligns with our values and demonstrates a strong commitment to public education. They will also desire to develop a comprehensive understanding of elementary schools, including school culture and the unique challenges each school faces. They will think strategically to identify opportunities for greater student achievement. *Commitment for this role can be up to 12-16 hours per month (about 3-4 hours each week) - some of which will be virtual.*

Brief Overview of the Organization

United to Learn (U2L) was founded by Abigail Williams, who created the concept based on her personal experience as a product of public education and later a private school parent and public school volunteer. Given the silos that exist across Dallas, Abby realized the untapped opportunity to activate Dallas' abundant talent and resources within a customized and proximate model to provide more equitable opportunities for ALL students.

At U2L we believe that our city's prosperity can be shared more equitably as more students are prepared for college and career success, thus we embrace our responsibility to address resource gaps in public education to achieve a more equitable, prosperous community. Knowing that a child who is reading on grade level at 3rd grade is three times more likely to achieve long term sustained academic success, U2L has defined 3rd grade literacy as our North Star metric.

To ensure efforts align to accelerate student outcomes, our research driven initiatives aim to: 1) improve our schools' **social emotional health**, 2) create aspirational **learning environments**, 3) drive student **literacy achievement**, and 4) **activate an informed community** empowered to advance for educational equity from a culturally competent perspective.

U2L partner schools have seen significant literacy achievement as demonstrated by Texas Education Agency ("TEA")-administered STAAR 3rd grade reading tests, with a growth of 39% over the five years preceding COVID, outpacing achievement seen across Dallas ISD, county, and state. Despite significant learning losses experienced nationwide in response to COVID disruptions, U2L partner schools saw only limited regression, approximately 50% of the losses seen across the District and County. Based on our success building relationships and driving student achievement, Dallas ISD invited U2L to expand to reach more students and campuses in need. In the 2020-2021 school year, United to Learn welcomed 21 partner elementary schools in Southern Dallas, representing a 64% increase over last year in students and educators served.

United to Learn now supports 2,100 educators and 26,110 students, reflecting one-third of all elementary students in Dallas ISD. Our partner schools are located citywide, with concentrations across Dallas ISD's Northwest Clusters as well as feeder patterns across Southern Dallas. Of our 26,110 supported students, 92% live in poverty, 51% are English language learners, and despite significant gains in recent years, an alarming majority of fourth grade students are not reading on grade level. Equally concerning, 90% have experienced prolonged trauma, enduring multiple adverse childhood experiences which can alter the structure of a child's brain, creating additional barriers to learning and academic success if left unaddressed. Racial demographics of our supported students reflect: 28% Black, 63% Hispanic, 9% Other. Of our students, 49% are female and 51% are male.

United to Learn is made up of full-time and part-time staff and contractors. We are governed by a Board of Directors and receive guidance throughout the year from an active Advisory Council.

Volunteers are intrinsic to the fabric of United to Learn. Twenty-eight hundred students, business professionals, and community volunteers contributed over 17,800 hours during the 2021-2022 school year, serving as school liaisons, tutoring young learners, completing campus improvement projects, distributing meals to families, and executing teacher appreciation initiatives, among other important roles.

Through our Community Activation programming, we inform, empower, and engage high school and college students and adults to understand systemic inequities that remain to be addressed, creating lifelong advocates for public education and building purposeful leaders who can find their role in eradicating those inequities.

To apply, please email U2LLiaisons@unitedtolearn.org.