

The Broad Prize for Urban Education

SHOWCASING SUCCESS



REWARDING ACHIEVEMENT

2002

The National Center for Educational Accountability
Supported by a grant from The Broad Foundation

The Broad Prize for Urban Education

Selection Jury

Lamar Alexander
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Henry Cisneros
Chairman and CEO
American CityVista

Phil Condit
Chairman and CEO
The Boeing Company

Marian Wright Edelman
President
Children's Defense Fund

John Engler
Governor
State of Michigan

Richard D. Parsons
CEO
AOL Time Warner

Paul Patton
Governor
State of Kentucky
Chairman
National Governors Association

Hugh B. Price
President and CEO
National Urban League

Richard Riley
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Andrew L. Stern
President
Service Employees International
Union

Review Board

Anne L. Bryant
Executive Director
National School Boards Association

Douglas Carnine
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President
National Hispanic Scholarship Fund

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Contents

The Broad Prize for Urban Education	3
<i>A new award to promote public school system excellence by highlighting effective educational practices that are making a clear and measurable difference in large city school districts</i>	
The Review and Selection Process	4
<i>A rigorous and comprehensive process that collected a wealth of data on educational progress and engaged the talents and expertise of researchers and leaders in education and business</i>	
The Finalists	10
<i>Atlanta Public Schools (GA)</i>	
<i>Boston Public Schools (MA)</i>	
<i>Garden Grove Unified School District (CA)</i>	
<i>Houston Independent School District (TX)</i>	
<i>Long Beach Unified School District (CA)</i>	
<i>District Best Practices:</i>	
<i>1. The district has clear and specific academic objectives</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2. The district provides its leadership with the resources, support and professional development to achieve academic objectives.</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>3. The district regularly monitors school and student performance</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>4. The district rewards, intervenes and/or adjusts its support to schools based on student performance.</i>	<i>16</i>

“For Americans, education has always been tied to the promise of equality and opportunity for all. Today, that tie is more vital than ever. Our future in the global economy depends on a growing supply of educated, motivated men and women who are comfortable with change. By highlighting the struggle of our urban schools to ensure that their students have what they need to participate and compete, The Broad Prize for Urban Education is helping point the way for our entire nation. Thanks to the Broad Prize, we are better able to reward and replicate the most innovative and effective practices in urban school districts, thus extending their example and impact. The Broad Prize amplifies as well as honors the effort to give all of America’s children, whoever they are, wherever they live, an equal chance to succeed. It represents the best and most enduring parts of the American Dream.”

— Richard D. Parsons
Chief Executive Officer
AOL Time Warner

THE BROAD PRIZE FOR URBAN EDUCATION

Showcasing Success, Rewarding Achievement

The Broad Prize for Urban Education was established to promote public school system excellence by highlighting effective educational practices that are making a clear and measurable difference in large city school districts. In 2002, the inaugural year of this annual Prize, a \$1,000,000 award will be presented to the large urban districts that have made the greatest overall improvement in student achievement while at the same time narrowing the achievement gaps across ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students. The winning districts will use the Prize to provide college and other postsecondary education scholarships to their students.

The Prize is designed to:

- Restore the American public's confidence in public schools by spotlighting districts that are making gains in student achievement.
- Create an incentive to dramatically increase student achievement in our nation's largest urban school districts.
- Reward public school systems that are successfully using creative, results-oriented approaches and techniques to better educate children.

"Ensuring achievement in America's urban public schools is the most important civil rights issue of the

new century," said Eli Broad, founder of The Broad Foundation. "Resourceful leadership, outside-the-box thinking and bold determination can make a clear and remarkable difference. The Broad Prize for Urban Education will reward and promote that spirit."

To encourage districts across the United States to replicate their best practices, the winning districts will be the subject of a nationwide communications effort designed to showcase their exemplary instructional and management practices so that districts across the country can learn from their success.

THE REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Compelling Data, Complete Analysis

Before presenting the inaugural award, The National Center for Educational Accountability (“the Center”) established a rigorous and comprehensive process that collected a wealth of data on educational progress and engaged the talents and expertise of researchers and leaders in education and business. The process was funded by a grant from The Broad Foundation.

There is no uniform measure of student performance in the United States. Some states test all of their students using only a norm-referenced test (NRT). The majority, however, have developed criterion-referenced tests (CRTs), which assess each student’s progress toward state benchmarks or standards.

It is important to note that the type of test used is not the only differentiating factor among the instruments used by the 50 states. While one state may test all grades from second or third grade on, others may test only at key progress points (i.e., fifth, eighth and 11th grades). Each state determines the difficulty and complexity of its own tests, which means that identical scores from different states do not necessarily represent identical achievement levels.

To ensure the most rigorous examination of these issues, the process for selecting the inaugural Broad Prize for Urban Education winner relied on qualified experts making informed recommendations based on objective data.

A Rigorous, Comprehensive Process

The review and selection process consisted of seven steps.

Step One: Initial Data Collection. The Center began by gathering statistical data on the largest school districts in urban centers throughout the United States. The Center’s research team developed preliminary data analysis procedures guided by statistical experts and individuals experienced with the development and investigation of best practices leading to improved academic achievement levels.

Step Two: Establishment of Review Board and Selection Jury. Eighteen distinguished education leaders were selected and organized into The Broad Prize for Urban Education Review Board. The Review Board was created to provide the critical expertise and judgment required to develop a consistent approach to collecting and analyzing highly disparate district data. The Review Board also was charged with recommending a group of finalists based on the data collected.

At the same time, a Selection Jury of 10 prominent national leaders was established to select the Broad Prize winner from the group of finalists recommended by the Review Board. The Jury was designed to include successful leaders from business, government, education and the nonprofit sector.

Step Three: Review Board Approval of Eligibility Criteria and Data Model. In early February 2002, the Review Board approved a list of 108 eligible districts and the framework and procedures for gathering and synthesizing data.

Step Four: Further Data Collection. The Center gathered student demographic and performance data on all eligible districts to present to the Review Board.

Step Five: Review Board Selection of Finalist Districts. The Review Board reviewed student demographic and performance data on all 108 eligible districts. Board members closely examined the data for each district, including performance on state-mandated tests, relationships between poverty levels and performance, and achievement growth between 1999 and 2001. Review Board members used their expertise and judgment to analyze the data provided by the Center to recommend a group of finalist districts for further consideration.

Step Six: Site Visits to Finalist Districts. A team of education practitioners and researchers visited each finalist school district for a comprehensive two-day site visit to gather evidence of best practices.

In addition, the five finalist districts were asked to provide additional data not readily available from other public sources.

Step Seven: Jury Selection of the 2002 Broad Prize Winner. The data collected during the site visits were combined with all prior data and presented to the Selection Jury. The Selection Jury reviewed all data and selected the winner of the 2002 Broad Prize for Urban Education.

Defining an Urban School District

To compile as complete — and fair — a list as possible, researchers examined data on every K–12 unified and independent public school district in the nation that serves a “metropolitan statistical area” as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

First, 25 districts that serve at least 100,000 students were automatically considered eligible.

Second, all school districts with between 35,000 and 99,999 students were examined for the following characteristics:

- Low-income enrollment — More than 40 percent of enrolled students in the district are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch programs or more than 40 percent of district schools qualify for schoolwide Title I funding.
- Minority enrollment — More than 40 percent of the district’s student enrollment is from ethnic minority groups.

“The Broad Prize serves to recognize educators in urban school systems who are making real strides at improving teaching and learning for their students. Broad Prize winners will be those districts that make clear that urban districts can effectively serve their youth and will illustrate paths that other districts might follow.”

— Frederick Hess
Resident Scholar
American Enterprise Institute

- Urban environment — More than 50 percent of the district’s schools directly serve a city center, or the metropolitan statistical area code for the district indicates service to a city center.

Based on this research, 64 districts were added to the initial list of 25.

Finally, the researchers included the largest K–12 district in each state not yet represented on the eligibility list, thereby ensuring all 50 states and the District of Columbia were represented. This made 19 additional districts eligible — a total of 108 eligible districts.

Using Publicly Available Data

Researchers then began collecting and analyzing publicly available performance data on state-mandated tests for all 108 eligible districts. When possible, they evaluated student performance on CRTs for the past three academic years (1999–2001). CRT data were preferred to NRT data because CRT data provide a measurement against a specific standard as well as the number of students reaching that standard. For districts that had less than three years of data using the same performance measures, the researchers reported these exceptions to the Review Board.

Researchers found that comparisons across states were extremely difficult to make, as the standards and rigor of individual states’ tests differed widely. Therefore, they concentrated on comparing districts’ performance to the expected performance of districts in their states with similar poverty levels. This required holding all data within each state to a certain level of standardization. For this reason, researchers elected to use only data supplied by each state’s department of education, ensuring that all data were from the same tests and were reported in the same manner for each state.

Adjusting for Poverty Levels

Researchers studied data collected from each state to determine the relationship between poverty levels and performance within the state. By using each district’s reported percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch programs, an

“expected performance level” was determined for each level of poverty within the state. For each year included in the analysis, every district in the state has a poverty statistic (the percentage of students in the district eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch programs) and a performance statistic (their score on the state test for that year). By plotting the poverty statistics on the X-axis and the performance on the Y-axis, a scatter plot graph was generated for each state. A linear regression was performed using the “least squares” method to generate a line that best fit the set of statistics for each year in the analysis. This regression line identified for researchers the “expected performance level” at each degree of poverty within the state. It then was possible to locate which eligible districts were above their state’s regression line and by how much. These analyses were performed at each school level (elementary, middle and high school) for reading/language arts. A second set of analyses was performed at each school level for mathematics.

Researchers then compared district performance over a three-year period with that district’s expected performance level. The result determined which urban districts could be considered high performing within their states by identifying districts whose performance was above the expected performance level for their level of poverty.

Achievement Performance, Growth and Improvement

Researchers also calculated a growth ratio that compared the relationship of the 2001 performance score with the 1999 score. This calculation was performed at each school level for reading/language arts and again for mathematics. A second analysis used these growth ratios to determine an “expected growth level.” This analysis was identical in procedure to the one previously described to identify expected performance levels, except that the growth ratio was used as the district’s improvement statistic. When this improvement statistic was plotted for each district on the Y-axis, along with the poverty statistic on the X-axis, a scatter plot similar to the performance scatter plots was generated. The same “least squares” method

Best Practices Apply to Districts, Schools and Classrooms

In 1999, Just for the Kids, a Texas-based nonprofit organization that now is part of The National Center for Educational Accountability, launched on-site research visits in Texas to identify what high-performing schools do differently from average-performing schools. Its work would become a mechanism for school improvement nationwide.

As high-performing districts and schools were identified based on state academic data, researchers made extensive visits to those districts, schools and classrooms that were at least 50 percent economically disadvantaged. Researchers conducted rigorous, structured interviews and collected evidence from district leadership, principals and classroom teachers. The findings were used to identify the strategies and practices districts had in place to accomplish such high academic performance over time with disadvantaged populations. The Center's researchers visited more than 100 sites over three years.

The research shed light on best practices that were consistent across districts, schools and classrooms. The interviews and site visits helped identify practices that were consistently used at all levels within the school system to develop sustained high performance. When these best practices are present at all three levels (district, school and classroom), school systems have the greatest opportunity to sustain high achievement for all students and reduce the achievement gaps among subsets of students.

The Center regularly will review and validate these practices through rigorous research visits to high-performing, as well as average-performing, districts and schools each year.

For further information on school site alignment and best practices at the district, school and classroom levels, please refer to www.just4kids.org.

then was used to fit a line through the points generated on the scatter plot and identify an “expected growth level” at each degree of poverty within the state. The growth ratios of all districts within each state were compared against these expected growth levels to determine which districts were improving faster than expectations would predict.

Together, these analyses provided a data picture of both the most recent test performance of these 108 eligible districts and each one's rate of improvement from 1999 to 2001. For each district, performance level and rate of improvement were examined in relation to the expected level for the district's level of poverty. In addition, the Center collected scores on Advanced Placement exams, SAT or ACT scores, graduation rates, dropout rates, attendance rates, statewide National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, and college matriculation rates for all 108 eligible districts. These data were presented to the Review Board in advance of its second meeting in April 2002. At that meeting, the Review Board members discussed the data collected and methods of analysis, weighed each component based on their own professional expertise and judg-

ment, and recommended five finalists for further study.

Request for Additional Data

With the field narrowed, it was necessary to look beyond the publicly available data and collect a standard set of additional elements from each finalist district. The additional data were reported to the Center by the districts themselves. As it was not possible to standardize the method in which districts had collected or analyzed the data, they were not used as part of any statistical analysis. Rather, they were collected and organized as additional information for the Selection Jury, which would make the final recommendations in selecting the Broad Prize winner.

The finalist districts were asked to provide additional data not readily available on state or public Web sites, including trend data beyond the previously examined three-year period. Where possible, researchers analyzed data from as far back as the 1995–96 academic year. Districts also were asked to provide information on overall performance and performance of ethnic and income subgroups; special

“What The Broad Prize for Urban Education will do is establish a model for success that every school district in the country can aspire to. The scholarship money is important and a valuable contribution — but the real payoff will come when other school districts see what success looks like so they can replicate that success in their own community.”

— Christopher Cross, Senior Fellow
Center on Education Policy

education enrollment and redesignation numbers; graduation rates; attendance, mobility and retention rates; and information on testing and exclusion policies.

Site Visits to the Five Finalist School Districts — Looking Beyond Statistics

Although a common gauge, statistics and test scores are not the only evidence of success. A district needs ongoing, sound, effective and flexible policies and practices to ensure consistent achievement gains. Such policies and practices can be assessed only by witnessing the district in action.

Each of the five finalists received a two-day site visit by a team of education practitioners and researchers. These teams consisted of school principals, professors, Baldrige evaluators, senior district leaders and teachers, many of whom have been nationally recognized. Each visit was conducted on an identical schedule requesting identical information.

A best practice protocol developed by Just for the Kids, a Texas-based education organization, was used to investigate practices and collect evidences as proof of action used to improve student performance (see box on page 7). This protocol was built based upon three years of research that separated average-performing schools from high-performing schools. This protocol is organized into four practices:

- 1. The district has clear and specific academic objectives.**
- 2. The district provides its leadership with the resources, support and professional development to achieve academic objectives.**
- 3. The district regularly monitors school and student performance.**
- 4. The district rewards, intervenes and/or adjusts its support to schools based on student performance.**

The box on page 9 provides a list of the evidence categories for each best practice.

During the visits, team members conducted more than 10 hours of comprehensive interviews in which they gathered more than 30,000 total pages of documentation illustrating 130 evidences of educational best practices for teaching and learning.

At each central office visit, interviews were held with the superintendent, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, school board president, union president, business and parent leadership representatives, and other senior district staff. School visits to one elementary and one high school were included as part of the evidence-gathering procedures. Interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers at each site. The site visit teams then determined the score of each category in the protocols based on the quality of evidence collected throughout the interviews and school visits. After all evidences from the five districts were brought together, they were reviewed by a single team of researchers.

District Best Practices and Evidence Categories

Each best practice developed by Just for the Kids includes evidences that offer proof of action used to improve student performance. The district finalists demonstrated almost 130 evidences of the four best practices.

Best Practice #1: The district has clear and specific academic objectives.

- 1.1 Clearly written curricular documents exist at the district level that identify the specific knowledge and skills students will acquire by grade level and subject.
- 1.2 Principals and teachers know exactly what is to be taught and learned at each grade and in each subject.
- 1.3 Vertical teams of teachers revise and refine the curriculum.
- 1.4 School site alignment of Best Practice #1.

Best Practice #2: The district provides its leadership with the resources, support and professional development to achieve academic objectives.

- 2.1 Strong instructional leaders are selected, and there is continual training and development of these leaders.
- 2.2 Personnel recruitment and selection are designed to improve instruction.
- 2.3 Staff development time, planned at both the district and school levels, and resources provide opportunities for teachers to meet collaboratively and are focused on specific academic goals.
- 2.4 Budget allocations and expenditures demonstrate a direct link to academic objectives and a continual commitment to using student data for focusing those expenditures.
- 2.5 Resources and programs are selected and/or developed based on scientific evidence and the specific needs of learners.
- 2.6 School site alignment of Best Practice #2.

Best Practice #3: The district regularly monitors school and student performance.

- 3.1 District benchmark assessments provide strong supplements to state and standardized tests.
- 3.2 Data use is an expectation for all decisionmaking.
- 3.3 District assessment data are continually studied and disaggregated to determine performance by school, instructor, gender, ethnicity or any other grouping that may be significant to the district.
- 3.4 School site alignment of Best Practice #3.

Best Practice #4: The district rewards, intervenes and/or adjusts its support to schools based on student performance.

- 4.1 Accountability for meeting student goals is present, and incentives for doing so are in place.
- 4.2 School interventions and adjustments are made in response to intermittent data review.
- 4.3 School site alignment of Best Practice #4.

Selection Jury

The information gathered from the site visits, along with all other data, was presented in a report to a distinguished jury of national leaders whose role was to determine the winner of the inaugural Broad Prize for Urban Education. In June 2002, the Selection Jury met to review the final report and determine the winner.

For each finalist, the Selection Jury examined a variety of data: demographics; performance for academic year 2000–01; improvement for academic years 1999–2001; income achievement gaps; ethnicity achievement gaps; site visit findings; and other indicators, including the percent of students tested in reading/language arts and mathematics, special education designation and redesignation, attendance rates, and SAT/ACT scores.

THE FINALISTS

Best Practices Improve Performance

If the United States is to continue to be the leader in our global economy, we must become the leader in educational achievement as well. The new federal legislation calling for higher performance from all students and greater accountability for students and educators means districts face unprecedented scrutiny. They must show sustained and measurable results, and they must eliminate the gaps that exist among students of various ethnic and income groups. Districts must succeed. There are no excuses.

Finalists for the 2002 Broad Prize for Urban Education — Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Garden Grove, CA; Houston, TX; and Long Beach, CA — met stringent criteria set by the Center:

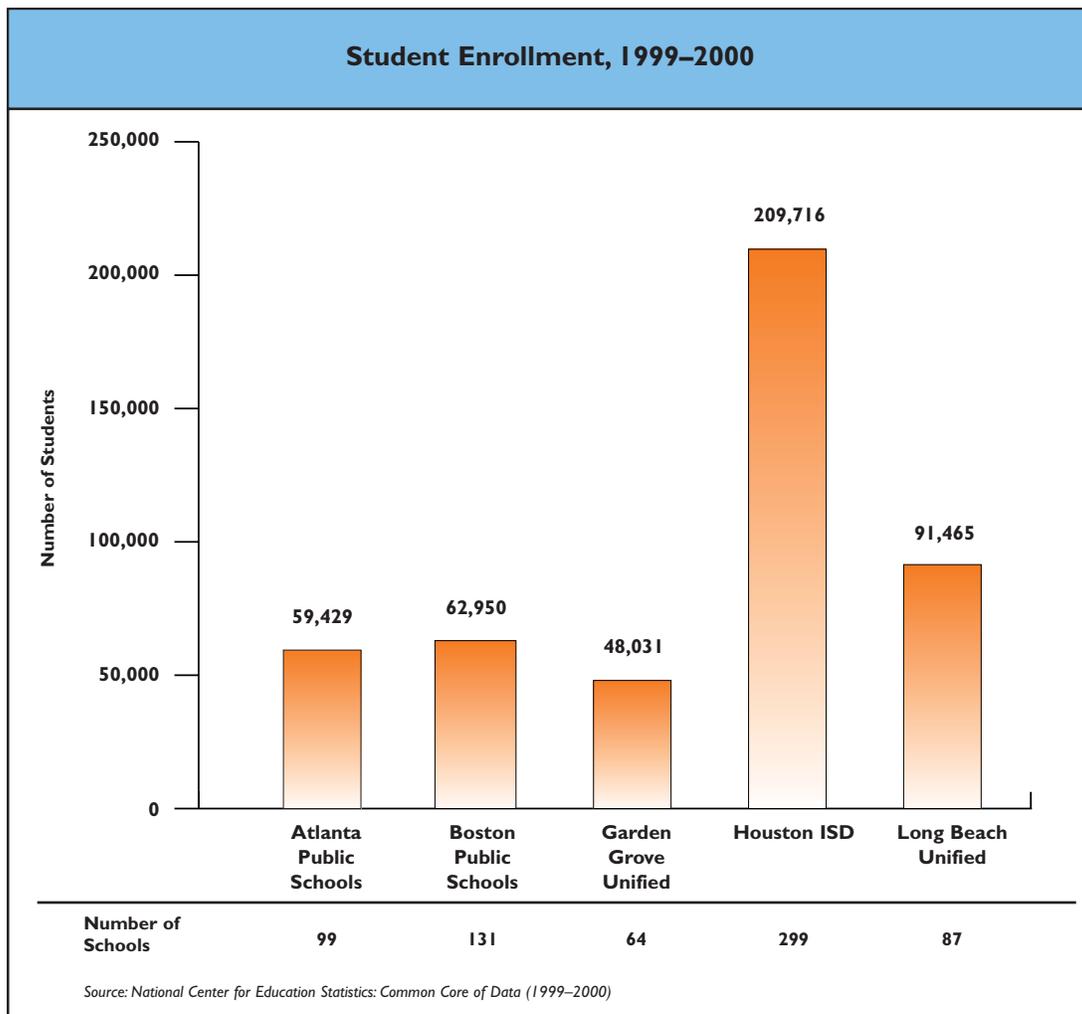
- All improved performance on their respective state-mandated tests in at least five of six areas during 1999–2001:
 - elementary school reading;
 - elementary school math;
 - middle school reading;
 - middle school math;
 - high school reading; and
 - high school math.
- All performed above their 2001 expected performance levels in a majority of the six areas.
- All were deemed “high performing” or “high improving” by the Review Board, which means that they performed or improved markedly above expectations for districts in their states with similar poverty levels in both reading and math.
- All showed evidence of narrowing achievement gaps between high- and low-income populations and between ethnic minority populations and their white counterparts.
- All performed or improved above expectations for districts with similar poverty levels in a majority of the six areas.
- All had 35,000 or more students and a multi-ethnic, high-poverty population.
- All site visits provided substantial evidence of:
 - a curriculum defined and communicated for student learning;
 - support and resources for teachers and principals based on academic goals;
 - continuous monitoring of student proficiency toward goals; and
 - rewarding, adjusting and intervening as necessary.

Finalists Employ a Wide Range of Best Practices

Finalists did not wait for the federal legislation to force them into bold — and commonsense — policies and practices to help their students achieve. These districts understand that progress develops over time and with great effort. They understand that they will succeed only if they continue to challenge their students — and themselves. And they understand that a passion for learning is only

the foundation of a solid education. Students and teachers need — and should expect — the right tools to help them achieve academic excellence. The districts identified by our research and profiled briefly in this report are offering more of the right learning tools to their students than their big-city peers. They deserve to be praised and, more important, emulated.

The five finalists are geographically separate, and their students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Yet the students in these districts have



made similar gains due to the similar methods each district employs. They share other traits as well.

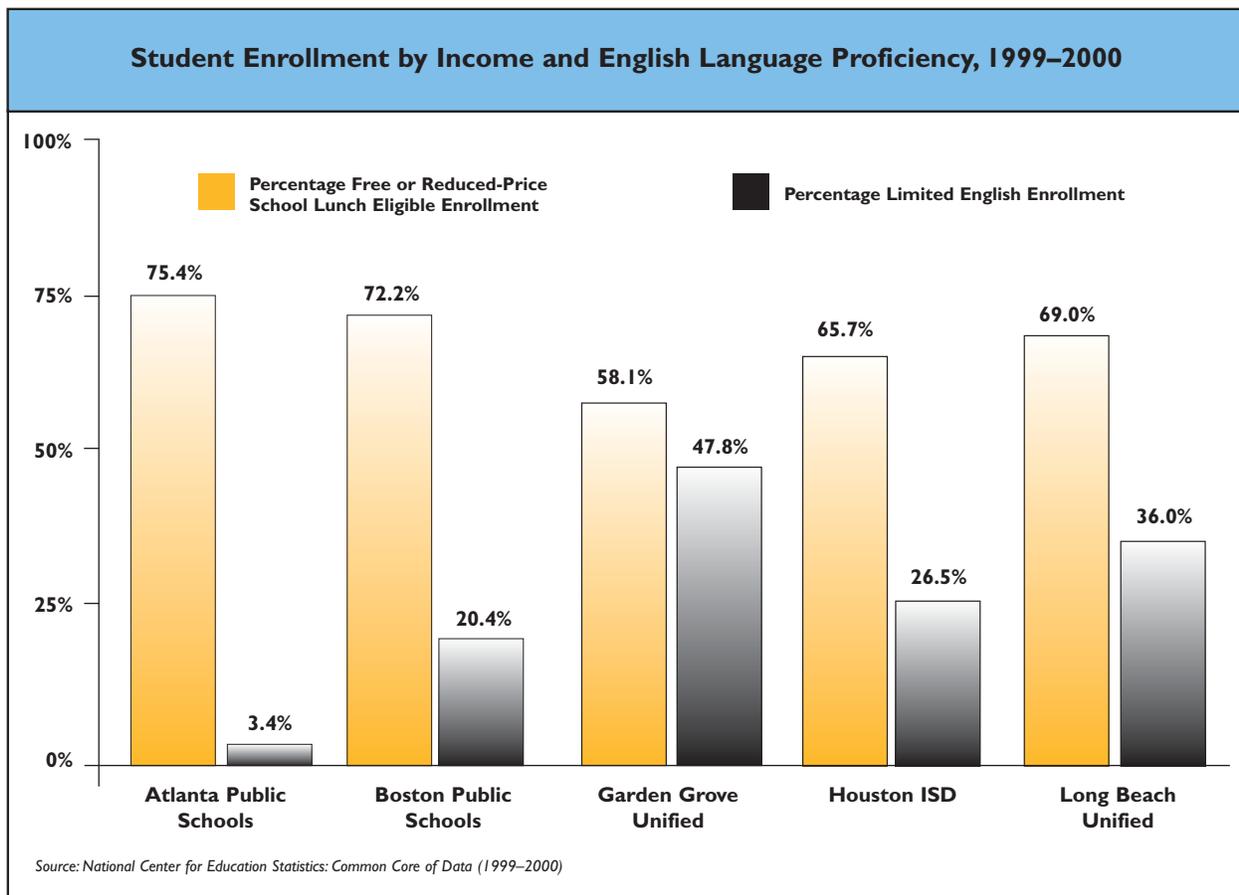
All five are led by superintendents with clear vision and a plan in place to make sure that vision is understood and carried out over time, with the goal always being improved student academic performance. Each district sees the importance of and spends a great deal of time establishing and building strong relationships with communities and labor groups. Another trait shared by these five finalists is the continuous use of data, not only to monitor student performance but also to target students' and teachers' needs and instructional areas requiring improvement. The district takes this information and provides leadership, resources and training to implement change. In each district, it was clear that data are a primary driver for decisions relating to academic improvement.

Finally, each of the five finalists uses multiple components of the best practices identified by the Center.

Best Practice #1:

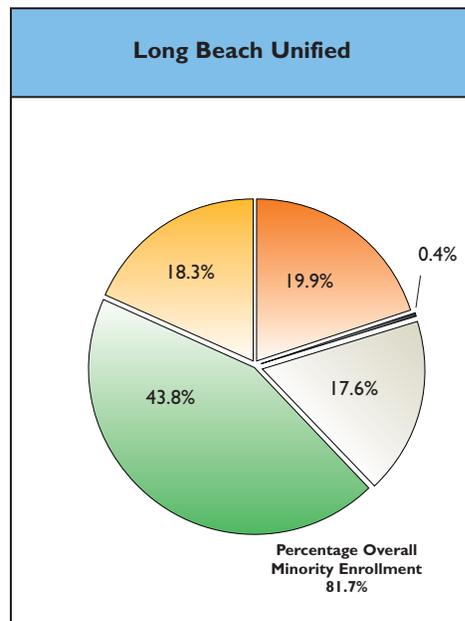
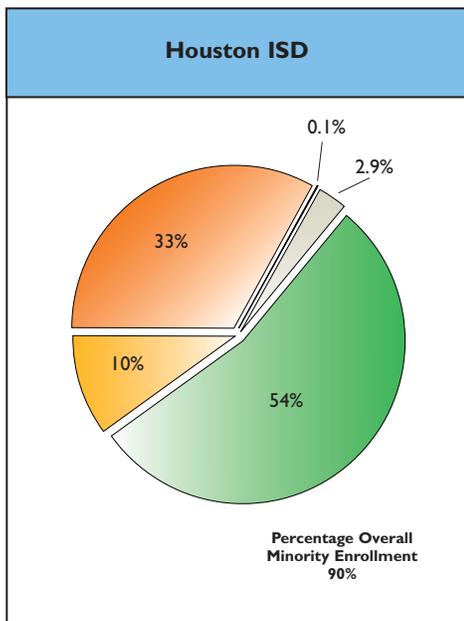
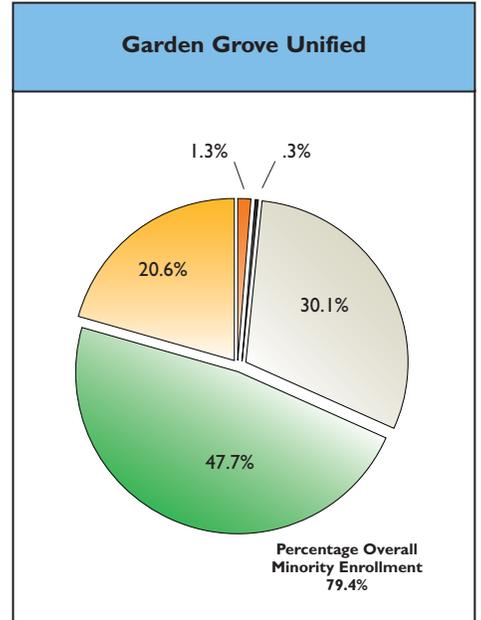
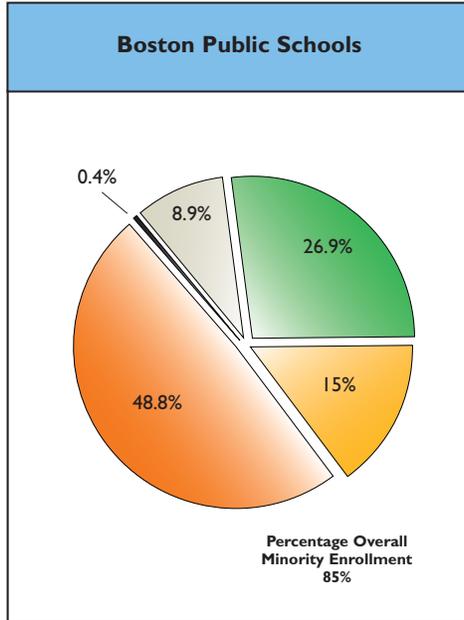
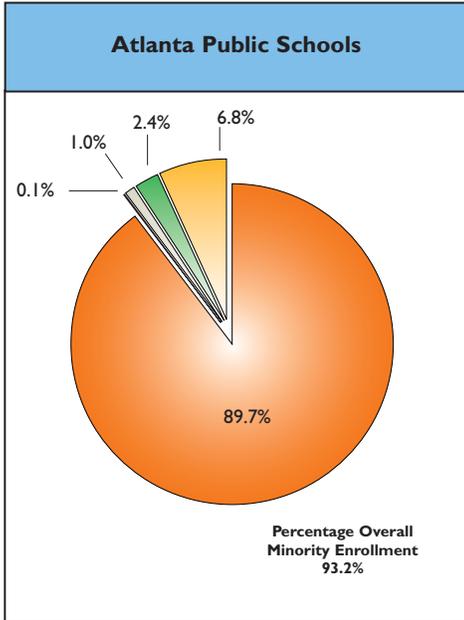
The district has clear and specific academic objectives.

In the **Houston Independent School District**, curriculum clarity is “front and center.” The principals and teachers know what to teach — by grade and subject — and they collaborate regularly with district-level leadership. “Why would you not have a district curriculum?” asked one teacher. “It’s our roadmap of what to teach.” Each week, elementary school teachers submit lesson plans to their respective principals. These plans are very detailed and explain each lesson’s objective, teaching strategies, learning activities and assessment items. They also show how the lesson is aligned with district goals and with the specific objectives designed for that particular week. The principal signs the lesson plans and makes them available in each school’s front office. Other staff and community members are welcome to review the plans.



Student Enrollment by Ethnicity, 1999–2000

American Indian/Alaskan Native
 Asian
 Hispanic
 African American
 White



Source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data (1999–2000)

In the **Garden Grove Unified School District**, ensuring that the academic objectives for every subject at each grade level are stated clearly and understood universally is reinforced in many ways. As the state of California has refined its curricular standards over recent years, leaders in the Garden Grove district have rewritten their district's curriculum to support the timely teaching of all the key skills and concepts in the standards. State standards are visibly present in every district classroom in the form of posters that list the key academic objectives for that year in each subject area. These posters provide each teacher with a constant roadmap of what they must teach in their grade to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the following grade. The Garden Grove district does not stop with posters for teachers. District leadership also understands how important it is to help parents understand what their children must learn and master in order to be promoted to the next grade. For this reason, the district developed books for parents at each grade level that outline, in clear language, what students will be learning in that grade. These books, published in both Spanish and English, are mailed to parents at the beginning of each school year.

Best Practice #2:

The district provides its leadership with the resources, support and professional development to achieve academic objectives.

It takes much more than buildings, computers and books to educate our children. It takes dedicated, trained and knowledgeable educators — at all levels — to connect with students and help them master the information and skills they need to be productive, engaged citizens.

Providing the right kind of leadership begins during the recruitment process. In the **Houston Independent School District**, there is a fundamental district expectation that all principals must be strong instructional leaders. They must have strong knowledge and understanding that student performance data drive what goes on at the school and in the classroom.

Furthermore, an online personnel recruitment system enables the main Houston district to respond quickly to any personnel-related requests from the 12 subdistricts. The system “dramatically cuts down our need to leave the district to go out and recruit,” according to one administrator. “It allows recruits from throughout the United States to find us. That is nothing short of a win-win strategy.”

To make sure **Atlanta Public Schools** principals can actually “walk the talk” about being instructional leaders, all recruits are handed a detailed package of assessment data and are given 30 minutes to develop one or more targeted interventions based on what the data reveal. Recruits do not seem to mind. Said one, “The test was a challenge for me. However, it's what I have to do on any given day at any given moment. So it was just like my first day on the job.”

The **Garden Grove Unified School District** uses detailed analyses of student performance to meet state standards. Teachers, principals and district administrators use the results to fine-tune the curriculum and strengthen instruction to address any weaknesses. One practical tool is an ongoing cumulative record of all assessments teachers use to demonstrate students' mastery of knowledge and skills. Principals review these “notebooks” regularly.

Teachers and principals at all grade levels in Garden Grove meet weekly to discuss curriculum and instructional programs, student performance, and other issues. As one teacher and principal noted, “These weekly meetings provide us the opportunity for identification of our success, but they also help us understand where we may need to move additional support or make adjustments in the classroom.”

Within the five finalist districts, professional development increasingly is focused on data — collection, reporting and application. Since 1997, the **Long Beach Unified School District** has used a five-year, standards-based, results-driven plan that directs K–12 staff development activities. All new teachers entering district schools begin with phase one and progress through the training program.

Phase one provides new teachers with a standard base of tools and principles for standards-based instruction. This training builds the foundation for data-driven teaching and enables teachers to effectively differentiate their instruction based on the results of that data while always working toward one set of benchmarks or standards. This ensures that, over time, all teachers in the district have a common platform of professional development. In the words of one teacher, “It really helped me know that I was teaching from the same instructional platform as the other teachers in the district. We are all working together to help the students reach these high standards, even if they move from school to school.”

Best Practice #3:

The district regularly monitors school and student performance.

Compiling, tracking and reporting data will continue to grow in importance as districts’ accountability to the public increases. Districts are compelled to gather and disseminate data accurately and responsibly.

All principals in the **Houston Independent School District** are very much “hands on.” Indeed, 65 to 75 percent of the time in an average day for Houston school principals is spent monitoring instruction in the classroom. This is in addition to time spent in the classroom by the assistant principal, the lead teacher and the mentor teacher. The principal monitors and reviews assessment results from teacher-made tests, school benchmarking tests,

teacher observation logs, lesson plans, grade-level meeting agendas, cross-grade-level meeting agendas and standardized state tests. The principal also monitors and reviews the multiple year trend data on academic performance for each classroom using the Program for Academic Student Success (PASS) online data system.

In the **Long Beach Unified School District**, all academic data are reported from classrooms to the district’s research office. The data include results from district benchmarking tests (by classroom and subject) and the state achievement test. All data are reported in a user-friendly manner so teachers and district leaders can readily adjust the curriculum and instructional program on an ongoing basis.

At the beginning of the school year, each principal receives a notebook with all the student data for their new students from previous years. This efficient system allows the district’s research office to respond to any teacher or administrator request for data, providing a report or an analysis within a matter of days.

But data collection and reporting is just the beginning. Monitoring performance is the next step in developing sound, cohesive plans that use a district’s strengths while addressing — and correcting — its weaknesses.

Long Beach’s data-reporting system has enabled administrators to respond quickly and positively to very specific situations. Last December, the analysis of one elementary school’s sixth-grade math performance showed the grade level as a whole was making inadequate progress. As a result, the school changed

“In education, high standards produce high achievement. That’s a fact. And that’s why The Broad Prize for Urban Education rewards high standards as well as high achievement. It inspires other districts to review their own operations, curriculum and programs and find ways to dramatically improve their results.”

— Douglas Carnine, Director
National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators

teaching assignments to bring stronger math instruction to that grade level — a solid example of data-driven decisionmaking that is making a difference for students.

In **Boston Public Schools**, each principal receives a notebook of district disaggregated data, including all achievement test data and demographic data. Each school identifies the types of support and instructional coaches they need from the central office. The district leadership then determines and prioritizes each school's specific needs and allocates resources accordingly. The process exemplifies two practices that often are articulated but seldom accomplished: data-driven decisionmaking and clear assignment of district roles and school roles.

Best Practice #4:

The district rewards, intervenes and/or adjusts its support to schools based on student performance.

All districts are under increasing pressure to improve student performance. What sets the five finalists apart is that they constantly are assessing their own performance, responding accordingly — and getting positive results.

The **Houston Independent School District** has developed an effective system to address low performance at all levels. A school site with low test scores in any one classroom or grade level will trigger a comprehensive review of the situation by a targeted assistance leadership team. The team, composed of the main district, subdistrict and local school leadership, analyzes all school data and determines what adjustments need to be made. The adjustments may include targeted staff development (related to the deficiency), grade-level changes in teaching assignments, lead teacher interventions,

mentor teacher interventions, peer-to-peer coaching for teachers, team teaching and a reallocation of the necessary resources.

Specific intervention plans are in place for every classroom. Every student is tested every year in every subject in addition to periodic benchmarking tests for diagnostic purposes. If any student is having trouble meeting the academic objectives, a specific instructional intervention takes place. This serves as an educational safety net for every student in the district.

These self-assessments also extend to professional performance. In **Atlanta Public Schools**, all instructional personnel — the superintendent, executive directors, academic coaches and teachers — are evaluated to the extent they are each responsible for improving achievement in the classroom. Staff evaluations and compensation plans state clearly and specifically in writing how district staff are held accountable for improving student achievement.

Boston Public Schools takes strong and effective action to improve student performance in low-performing schools by analyzing the progress of individual schools and implementing specific intervention strategies to address their particular needs. For example, in a sweeping restructuring of a large, low-performing high school, the district designated each floor of the school as a school within the school. Each floor was provided its own principal and teachers who focused on their individual school's needs. The district provided additional academic coaches for each school. The changes in organization, structure and leadership have resulted in students' improved academic performance.

The National Center for Educational Accountability

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The Broad Foundation is a Los Angeles-based entrepreneurial grant-making organization, established in 1999 by Eli and Edythe Broad. The foundation was started with an initial investment of \$100 million that recently was increased by the Broad family to \$400 million. The foundation's mission is to dramatically improve K–12 urban public education through better governance, management and labor relations.

The foundation's other major initiatives include The Broad Center for Superintendents, a national organization focused on identifying, preparing and supporting outstanding leaders to become successful urban school superintendents, and The Broad Institute for School Boards, an annual training program for newly elected school board members designed to increase student achievement through improved governance.

The National Center for Educational Accountability, led by Dallas businessman Tom Luce, is a joint venture of Just for the Kids, a nonprofit entity established in 1995; The University of Texas at Austin; and the Education Commission of the States, an interstate compact that helps state policymakers shape education policies. This collaboration brings together a proven education accountability reporting and research model, the research strengths of a major university, and policy information and state education leaders from across the nation.

The Center's work focuses on:

- using academic performance data to identify best practices in state and local education accountability systems;
- developing research on best practices of high-performing districts, schools and classrooms; and
- translating best practices research into cutting-edge resources and policy models available to state leaders for implementation.

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