

# The 2008 **Broad Prize** for Urban Education

Celebrating Excellence in America's Public Schools



The Broad Prize for Urban Education sculpture, designed by artist Tom Otterness, resides at the U.S. Department of Education and is inscribed each year with the name of the winning district. The winning school district also receives a bronze sculpture for its central office, and each finalist school district receives a smaller stone sculpture. Sculpture © Tom Otterness, 2002.

# The Broad Prize for Urban Education

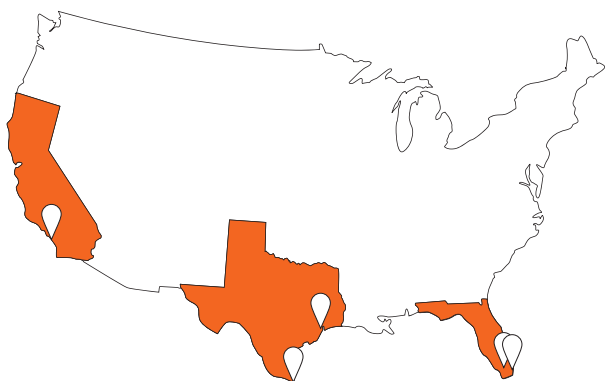
Celebrating Excellence in America's Public Schools

The \$2 million Broad Prize in Urban Education, the nation's largest K-12 public education award, is given annually by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation to five large urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing income and ethnic achievement gaps.

One hundred of the largest urban American school districts—serving more than 9 million students—are eligible each year. Graduating seniors in the winning Broad Prize district will receive \$1 million in college scholarships; students in each of the four finalist districts will receive \$250,000 in scholarships.

## The 2008 Broad Prize Finalists:

Aldine Independent School District, Texas  
Broward County Public Schools, Florida  
Brownsville Independent School District, Texas  
Long Beach Unified School District, California  
Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Florida



Sweeping across the southern perimeter of the United States, close to major ports of entry into Florida, Texas and California, the 2008 Broad Prize finalist districts represent opportunity to families who have come to the United States from around the world.

Nearly 90 percent of Brownsville residents speak a language other than English; in Miami-Dade County, more than half of the total population is foreign-born. One of every three Aldine students is learning English for the first time; in Long Beach, one in every four. In Broward County, nearly two-thirds of all students are Hispanic or African-American.

Each of these districts has surpassed its statewide peers in narrowing ethnic and income achievement gaps. All have shown significant progress in helping students—all students, no matter their background—prepare for and attend college. In our increasingly global society, the best practices underway in these districts stand as guideposts for other urban American districts looking to improve learning opportunities for all students.



## Aldine Independent School District

In a Stephens Elementary School hallway in North Houston, dozens of college flags line the wall, a row of colorful arrows pointing young Aldine Independent School District students toward their future. Half a mile away, at Aldine's MacArthur High School, name plates outside every classroom door identify teachers by the colleges and universities where they received their degrees.

Yet students throughout Aldine aren't just surrounded by visible reminders of high expectations for college attendance; they are working toward them every day. In this three-time Broad Prize finalist district—located on the northern side of Texas' largest city—leaders have carefully mapped the district's curriculum to ensure that today's college and work requirements inform student learning from first grade through high school.

"We want every single one of our students to have the opportunity to go to college," says Carolyn Milton, middle school testing coordinator and president of the Texas State Teachers Association. "Even if they would rather take a job right out of high school, they should be able to make that choice themselves, instead of having it made for them."

Aldine educators at all levels are helping students meet this goal. In 2007, Aldine students outperformed their peers in other Texas districts in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology. In middle school reading, for example, 89 percent of Aldine's Hispanic students scored proficient on state tests in 2006, compared to 78 percent statewide. In elementary math, 87 percent of Aldine's low-income students scored proficient, compared to 80 percent statewide.

### College and Work? Write This Way

One of the reasons Aldine students are ahead today is because the district has designed its curriculum to prepare them for college and work starting as early as elementary school.

To expand college readiness throughout the district, district leaders have for years offered gifted and talented courses at the elementary level, increased the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high schools, and offered more opportunities for students to enroll in local colleges and universities to gain college credit during their high school years.

In high school, Aldine requires every ninth grader to complete a "personal education plan," a document that guides each student along an individualized path towards graduation, incorporating their personal interests and learning goals.

"As soon as they start high school, the planners come home," says Janice Evans, grandparent of an Aldine senior. "They guide students about the required subjects they will need to take, how many credits—but also guide their specific interests."

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	70
Number of Schools	67
Number of Students	60,083
Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch	80%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	31%
Number of Teachers	3,923
Annual Budget (in millions)	\$439



When teachers at one Aldine high school noticed a dip in AP calculus exam passing rates a few years ago, the school quickly responded. Teachers designed summer courses in pre-calculus and replaced several of the school's honors courses with additional AP offerings for ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. When the approach proved successful, district leaders replicated it in all high schools in the district. Today, similar summer courses and additional AP courses for ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders continue to be offered.

"It's tough for a student to succeed in an advanced AP course when they haven't had the basics first," says Mark Hockman, a MacArthur High School math teacher. "The district really supported us in getting our students ready to enroll in the upper-level courses."

Preparation for high school honors and AP starts in the elementary and middle grades, in large part through "vertical teaming"—collaboration among elementary, middle and high school staff within one of the three vertical pre-K-12 school feeder patterns.

Every month, principals from each vertical team gather with their area superintendent to discuss curricular and extracurricular goals for their schools. During these meetings, school leaders make decisions about pacing and coursework to ensure that their students are prepared to advance from one school level to the next. Such frequent communication across elementary, middle and high schools is particularly important in a district like Aldine where students may transition between schools as many as five times before the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

"We get kids who are prepared to be here," says Cindy Bengé, a language arts skills specialist at MacArthur High School. "They come to us understanding our expectations for discipline and academics."

The early readiness efforts are paying off. Aldine participation in AP courses has increased dramatically—more than tripling at MacArthur High School, for example, from 2003 to 2008. Average SAT scores for African-American and Hispanic students are also on the rise in Aldine. Between 2004 and 2007, African-American student scores rose by 23 points, and Hispanic student performance increased by 18 points.



## Comfort With Data

On a hot late-summer afternoon in a small conference room at MacArthur High School, English teachers Joanne Rivera and Leah Domer sit crouched over a large stack of paper, examining detailed reports on the district's interim assessments from the previous school year.

"You can see here that a few of my honors English students continued to struggle with critical analysis at the end of last year," says Domer, as she pulls a report from the stack and points to a row of scores on a particular set of questions.

"Then we will need to revisit that right away this year," says Rivera, who will have several of Domer's students in her 11<sup>th</sup> grade English classes this year. "Can you share the lesson plans you used to target that area? What would you suggest doing differently for these students?"



Before the start of each school year, conversations like this take place throughout Aldine between grade levels in pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle and high schools, and among departments in the upper grades. Teachers and school leaders rely on detailed student achievement data to inform their pacing, lesson plans and instruction from the time a student first walks into their classroom.

Leah Domer is able to point to the exact areas in which her students will need additional time this year, thanks to the district's regular administration of interim assessments and detailed reporting of results. With benchmark tests given in all Aldine grade levels at least twice a year, teachers can quickly and easily access results at any time via the district's online data warehouse—within hours after the assessments are given. Students' answers can be broken down by individual learning standards so teachers can analyze weak spots and trends.

Multiple forms of ongoing communication ensure that Domer isn't the only one who knows how her students performed. In addition to planning before the start of the school year, Domer's English department and grade team colleagues at MacArthur will continue to review and discuss their classes' overall strengths and weaknesses during monthly teacher "data chats" led by Aldine department chairs and curriculum specialists. During these meetings, teachers learn to use data to spot individual students who need assistance, identify difficult concepts, and seek out advice from other teachers whose students have had more success.

Sharing results in such a public manner—and then using them to guide lesson plans, instruction and interventions—has not always been so commonplace in Aldine.

"We used to believe that bad test results were just the result of bad tests," says Joanne Rivera, a veteran Aldine teacher. "We were funny about the assessments at first, because seeing the results just made us uncomfortable."

By calling for transparency from the top down—and by showing teachers that more information about performance translated into more success in teaching to students' needs—Aldine leaders overcame resistance to widespread, transparent data-sharing.

"When you start to see how data brings teachers together, results in better lessons, and even increases test scores," says Domer, "you start to think 'well, maybe this isn't such a bad idea after all.'"

Since 2004, Aldine has narrowed achievement gaps between its low-income and non-low-income students and between African-American and Hispanic students and the statewide average for white students in reading and math. For example, between 2004 and 2007, the district's African-American students narrowed the gap with the state average for white students by 16 percentage points in middle school math.



## One Team, One Set of Goals

Outside the Aldine central office, the sweltering Houston heat and humidity has cleared the streets. Birds perched listlessly under the shade of nearby trees are dissuaded from the slightest motion.

But inside, the building hums with activity—and air conditioning. Pacing briskly across the board room, Superintendent Wanda Bamberg talks a mile a minute, leading her cabinet through a rapid-fire discussion about the district's mid-year progress toward its strategic goals.

An internal accountability system in Aldine keeps leaders at all levels of the district actively and singularly focused on the district's mission of “producing the nation's best.”

A central piece of this accountability system is the balanced scorecard—a strategic organizational planning and management practice frequently found in the business sector—which Aldine uses to focus every district employee on common goals and to monitor school, department and district-wide progress.

For example, every quarter, principals set school scorecard goals for attendance, student performance, staff development and parental involvement. The scorecard then enables them to monitor progress regularly and guides their day-to-day decision-making, allowing them to redirect staff, resources and activities to serve the school's main goals when they veer off track.

Scorecards at the school level roll up into a scorecard for each of the district's five geographic regions, enabling area superintendents to keep track of trends and similarly redirect efforts when necessary.

At the district level, data from each school and scorecards are combined to enable directors and area superintendents who oversee curriculum, human resources, finance and other critical departments to track quarterly progress toward district-wide performance targets. Math curriculum directors, for example, can use scorecards to track trends on interim math assessments across all schools and to inform adjustments to the course content that will support progress toward 100 percent mastery.

The district's strategic plan sets out broad principles and goals for every employee and student in the district. But it is the scorecard—a dynamic tool that is updated, adjusted and monitored continuously throughout the year—that empowers Aldine's leaders to link those goals to current performance and adjust their strategies on an ongoing basis to maximize student learning.

Aldine's focus on strategic performance, together with a data-driven culture and a commitment to students' college and career success, has earned it a spot among the nation's most successful urban school districts for the third time in five years. ■ ■ ■



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## Broward County Public Schools

Just before 8 a.m. on a humid spring morning in Hollywood, Fla., a group of Orange Brook Elementary School fifth graders are engaged in an early morning math lesson. Outside the coral-toned building's classroom windows, palm trees rustle.

"What is the formula for the circumference of a circle?" asks teacher Alisa Clifton, taking a moment to point out that the " $\pi$ " at issue should not be confused with the region's favorite dessert: key lime pie.

In response, a student at the front of the classroom selects an oversized red marker and swiftly writes " $C = 2r \times \pi$ " on an interactive whiteboard—a large screen that allows students to create and modify images from a nearby computer. Students use the whiteboard to manipulate numbers, pictures and charts at the front of the room with a pen or the touch of a finger.

"What do you think?" Clifton polls the class.

"Power clap!" the students shout in unison and clap their hands twice in praise for their classmate.

Clifton has harnessed the early-morning energy of these Broward County Public Schools students by engaging them with the whiteboard—just one example of cutting-edge educational technology in classrooms throughout the district.

As soon as Clifton's students master the formula for a circle's circumference, she asks another brave volunteer to come forward and adjust the size of circular shapes on the projection screen to illustrate the relationship between radius, circumference and size.

"Students become especially engaged when we use the white board," says Clifton. "This student would be shy if I asked him to explain from his desk. But getting a chance to hold the pen and move things around on the screen increases his interest in what they're learning."

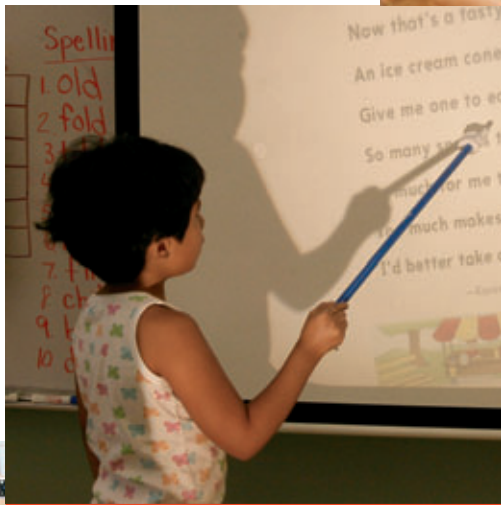
Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	6
Number of Schools	286
Number of Students	258,904
Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch	44%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	9%
Number of Teachers	17,000
Annual Budget (in millions)	\$5,000

### Technology-Rich Learning Environments

In this first-time Broad Prize finalist district—the sixth-largest district in the nation—integrated technology and high student engagement are paying off especially for African-American and Hispanic students, who are achieving at higher levels than their state-wide counterparts in reading and math at all grade levels. In 2007, 75 percent of Hispanic students in Broward elementary schools achieved proficiency on state standardized tests, compared to 63 percent of the state's Hispanic elementary school students.

The performance stems, in part, from the district's 2004 adoption of an aggressive technology plan to help ensure that Broward students have access to the types of literacy and technology skills that 21<sup>st</sup> century careers will require.





“Technology is the great equalizer,” says Superintendent James Notter, “and I predict it will be what helps school districts nationally overcome poverty.”

The district found the funds to pay for the additional classroom technology by eliminating other expenditures that were not directly contributing to the district’s mission of increasing student learning.

In a district with what Notter calls “Fortune 100 technology infrastructure,” all schools have mobile laptop carts, every classroom has at least two computers, and most have electronic white boards, speakers, microphones and document cameras. This rich classroom technology enables teachers to introduce curriculum content in novel ways—such as manipulating three-dimensional blocks on a projection screen during a geometry lesson rather than passing out worksheets.

“Students sometimes have a hard time understanding how their learning will have practical use,” says Andrew Yao, a math teacher at Broward’s McFatter Technical High School. “But when we introduce technology, they grab on. It’s much easier for them to understand vectors, for example, if they can use a computer to simulate the effect of wind on an airplane.”

### Real-Time Differentiation Tools

In Karla Coleman’s fourth-grade classroom at Orange Brook Elementary, the Bobcats, Tigers and Panthers have marked their territory: Bobcats on the reading rug, Tigers in a circle near the windows, and Panthers at computers in the back of the room.

But it’s no zoo in Coleman’s room; these “wildcat” groupings are Coleman’s way of identifying groups of students at different levels of reading mastery. The Bobcats work independently on the rug, each choosing their own books from a nearby shelf. The Tigers have Coleman’s full attention as she reads to the group. And in the back, wearing large headphones, the Panthers each play a computer game designed to increase their vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Coleman is able to group and re-group students each week based on their individual needs—a technique she and her fellow teachers can do easily because they receive a steady stream of assessment data from the district showing their students’ current skills, abilities and where they need more help.

Broward teachers even have access to longitudinal information on every student in the district—including state assessment scores, attendance, grades, discipline and program interventions. While most districts provide teachers with just one to two years of student data, Broward provides information on students for as long as they have been enrolled in the district. Housed in the district’s “data warehouse,” student-level data can be accessed remotely with a password any time of day or night. Online reports include easy-to-read charts and graphs depicting important trends and changes in a student’s educational career.

To empower teachers to respond far more quickly than once a year to evolving student learning needs, the district supplements results on state assessments with district-developed interim benchmark tests, given



twice each year in reading, language arts and mathematics in third through 10<sup>th</sup> grades and aligned to state standards. Teachers can also create customized mini-tests on particular topics, drawing from an online battery of questions. A scanner at the school site uploads students' answers, and within minutes, results are posted on the district's data warehouse site so that a teacher can immediately work on a plan to focus on areas of the greatest need.

"I can create a short assessment just on cause and effect, if that's what I'm teaching, using questions that the district knows are aligned with the end-of-year test," says Joyce Romeo, a second-grade teacher at Hunt Elementary School.

Between 2004 and 2007, this user-friendly data warehouse and real-time information on student learning has helped Broward educators narrow achievement gaps between Hispanic students and their white counterparts in reading and math—in reading, by three points in elementary school, five in the middle school grades and three at the high school level, according to The Broad Prize methodology.

### Instructional Leadership at All Levels

Orange Brook Elementary School Principal Joanne Nitti beams as she watches first-grade teacher Tayna Krecker smoothly transition a group of students from their daily spelling lesson to independent reading without losing a moment of attention.

"Ms. Krecker is one of our very best," says Nitti, who notes that the six-year teacher was one of the first at Orange Brook to receive a National Board certification—the highest American recognition of professional teaching excellence. "I grabbed her up while she was student teaching, and we've all been very fortunate that she decided to stay."

Broward County has reason to be proud of teachers like Krecker. The district has more Nationally Board-certified teachers than any other school district in America. In 2007, more than 6 percent of Broward County teachers were National Board certified. Nearly a third of them work in the district's Title I schools.

Across the district, Broward's National Board-certified teachers have become central to efforts to strengthen teaching across classrooms. They serve as teacher-leaders, mentoring and working alongside their less-experienced colleagues to help them improve their techniques.

For example, Krecker recently established a study group to help newer Orange Brook teachers also earn their national certification. "She gathers all of our teachers together at lunch, during their planning periods or after school and helps them work on their National Board portfolios and prepare for their exams," says Nitti.

In addition to assistance from their National Board-certified colleagues, teachers also receive instructional support from formal and informal mentors, including school team leaders, department chairs and Broward County "recognized teachers"—those who are qualified for National Board certification but ineligible because their content areas are not sponsored.



And teacher-leaders have an extra incentive to step up and help others in Broward: annual bonuses of up to \$10,000 or 20 percent of a teacher's base salary are provided for those who mentor new teachers.

"Teacher leadership is contagious here," says Stephanie Matarelli, a team leader at Orange Brook Elementary. "Principals are encouraged to make time available for teams of teachers during the school day, whether it's to build a portfolio for National Board certification or just to share practices and learn from each other."

Although the vast district contains 286 schools and more than 17,000 teachers, its tightly woven web of instructional support, its culture of continuous improvement based on data and its state-of-the-art classroom technology have positioned Broward County to continue to outpace its peer districts across the state. ■ ■ ■

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## Brownsville Independent School District

On the playground of Reynaldo Longoria Elementary School, students at recess kick a soccer ball across an asphalt yard just a short distance from the muddy river that constitutes the border between the United States and Mexico. Located at the bottom tip of Texas along the Rio Grande River, the Brownsville Independent School District is the southern-most district along the U.S./Mexico border.

Although 94 percent of the district's students qualify for free and reduced-price school lunch, Brownsville's commitment to excellence, meeting the needs of English-learners and providing a wealth of enrichment opportunities has propelled the district to some of the highest performance levels in Texas.

In 2007, Hispanic and low-income students in this first-time Broad Prize finalist district achieved higher average proficiency rates than their statewide counterparts at all grade levels in math, and in reading in the elementary grades, according to The Broad Prize methodology. For example, 87 percent of Brownsville's Hispanic students scored proficient on state standardized math assessments in the elementary grades, compared to 82 percent statewide. Eighty-six percent of students in Brownsville who qualify for free and reduced-price school lunch scored proficient in elementary school math in 2007, compared to 80 percent statewide.

Today, eyes across the nation are focused on whether U.S. immigration policy will result in the construction of a concrete wall in Southern Texas between Brownsville and Mexico. The school district's policies, however, stand in sharp contrast, as administrators and teachers work collectively to break down traditional barriers to opportunity and embrace the rich cultural diversity among Brownsville's students, many of whom are first-generation immigrants.

"We have very high expectations for all of our students," says Norma Jean Torres, principal of Yturria Elementary. "Maybe they don't speak English or they're the first in their family to go to school. But they are just as capable of success as any other child in the United States."

Brownsville's commitment to send every child to college or to enable them to have a successful post-secondary career drives all activities, programs and decisions made in the district, says Superintendent Hector Gonzales, himself a native of the lower Rio Grande Valley region and whose family emigrated from Mexico.

"My son and I have benefitted so much from this district," says Tess Cortinez, parent of a Brownsville high school student. "They've helped him become focused, so he knows what he wants to study and what he wants to do in college. And as a parent, they've helped me better understand how to support his goals."

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	94
Number of Schools	52
Number of Students	48,858
Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch	94%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	43%
Number of Teachers	3,272
Annual Budget (in millions)	\$477



### ¿Como se dice “success”?

When Daniel was 7 years old, his family emigrated from Mexico to the United States. He ended up in a third-grade classroom in Brownsville.

“English was so hard for him,” remembers his former Villa Nueva Elementary School principal, Jose Martinez. “Daniel had never spoken a word of anything other than Spanish. He had never even been to school.”

It’s a common story in Brownsville, where more than 2,000 students cross the border each year and begin their schooling. Yet while far too many immigrant students in other American districts today fall through the cracks, Daniel and many other Brownsville students have beaten the odds.

In 2007, Daniel graduated as high school valedictorian and was accepted to Harvard University.

“He had offers from Stanford and MIT, but he chose Harvard,” says Martinez. “Imagine that.”

In Brownsville, where more than 40 percent of the student population is designated as English language learners, helping them excel in school and in life is a daily goal.

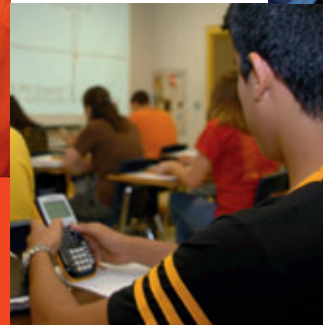
To closely track student progress and to decide which students to place into English language learner programs, which to keep in and which to exit, Brownsville has established a language proficiency committee with the sole responsibility of ensuring that every student masters English. The committee, composed of teachers and school and district leaders, maintains records for each child and tracks their grades and reading and math assessment results each grading period from the moment they enter the bilingual program until two years after they have exited, to make sure they don’t fall behind. With support from the advisory committee, any student who does not excel in English may be immediately re-enrolled in the bilingual program or receive additional help as needed.

The district offers intensive English language instruction in every grade and in all schools. In the early grades, the district offers bilingual instruction in English and Spanish, as well as dual-immersion programs in four of the district’s 33 elementary schools, where both English language learners and English speakers learn in Spanish and English. In traditional classrooms—in which instruction is conducted solely in English—all teachers are trained in “sheltered” English instruction, strategies designed to help English language learners learn English while simultaneously mastering academic subject matter.

The remarkable result: by the end of the third grade, 80 percent of Brownsville students are proficient in English. By the fourth grade, the majority of English language learners have left ELL programs.

For those immigrant students who enroll in the Brownsville district and have already earned K-12 course credits in their home country, the University of Texas at Austin helps the district appropriately transfer those credits into the U.S.





“A student may understand algebra and have the reading level of an 11<sup>th</sup> grader, but a lot of times they won’t have any documentation to tell us that they’ve completed coursework in those subjects,” says Jeanette Fenemore, a counselor at Hanna High.

University staff help obtain student transcripts and interpret them with district administrators to ensure that students are being placed at the proper grade level and are receiving appropriate course credit. The university’s support in cutting through red tape has enabled many more Brownsville students to accelerate their high school studies, rather than unnecessarily re-taking courses.

Programs like these are paying off for Brownsville students—particularly for Hispanic and low-income students, who are outperforming their peers in similar Texas districts in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.

Advanced Placement course participation by Hispanic students rose 9 percentage points in Brownsville between 2004 and 2007; and the percentage of Hispanic students taking the SAT also increased by nine points during the same period.

Rosanna Bara, a native Spanish-speaker and parent of a third-grader at Morningside Elementary, says “within two months after I enrolled my son in Brownsville schools, the district had assessed his needs and provided him just the right amount of extra help to support his English language development. This year, he took the state test in English and improved his reading to a passing score.”

## Art Smart

In a warm, honey-colored library at Benavides Elementary School, a group of fourth-grade students is enjoying an elaborate meal—of books. Dressed in costume, plumes spilling over their broadly-rimmed hats, the students sit primly at library tables, ordering from menus of the literary greats.

“I will have the Shakespearean Combo, please,” a little boy requests of one of his peers, who serves as maître’d for the afternoon. His classmate quickly returns with an armful of books about and by the famous playwright.

Every month, students at Benavides transform the school library into a mock-restaurant and design “combination platters” of readings from or about a specific period of history. They create their own costumes, decorate the library walls and enact a theatrical performance. But the star performance is really that of their teachers, who know that when the arts are used to spark learning, their students will organically absorb book content, reading skills, knowledge of authors and history.

Lean economic times often mean that fine arts in American school districts are among the first programs to be cut. But in Brownsville, art is widely accepted as the universal language that leads a large population of immigrants to strong gains in core academics like math and English.



“Every opportunity the district has to introduce something creative into our students’ lives, they take it,” says Marisela Cortez, director of the Historic Brownsville Museum and active district partner. “In Spanish and in English, it brings their education to life.”

But the arts in Brownsville aren’t contained to the dance studio or orchestra pit. In math, reading and science at all grade levels, educators incorporate music, dance and the visual arts into their lesson plans.

For example, a deep sea unit prepares Benavides third-graders for an upcoming field trip to South Padre Island, just a few miles off the Texas coast. Students not only learn about the natural inhabitants of the coastal waters, but they also wallpaper the hallways with drawings and three-dimensional collages of sand-dwellers, dolphins, sea cucumbers and angler fish so that other students in the school will experience a deep-sea dive on their way to lunch.

Brownsville educators know well that the “pobrecito” belief—excuses made for students from other countries and disadvantaged backgrounds—will not inspire achievement for its neediest students. Instead, the success of Brownsville’s rich and creative instruction, targeted programs for English language learners, and a district-wide commitment to student excellence speaks for itself.

From 2004 to 2007, Brownsville significantly increased reading proficiency among traditionally disadvantaged groups on state assessments. Both Hispanic and low-income students in Brownsville have posted gains as high as 13 percentage points at the elementary school level.

“In Brownsville, we celebrate our rich diversity,” says Dawn Hall, principal at Lopez High School. “Our students’ backgrounds and multiple languages are their strengths. We help them build on those to make sure their skills are strong when they graduate into the ‘real world.’” ■ ■ ■

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## Long Beach Unified School District

With confidence that belies her age, Jenna Martinez explains the business proposition for “OptimoCo,” a solar-powered energy company that she has founded—or, at least, someday hopes to.

“In addition to producing electricity, our facility will run off solar energy,” she tells her Millikan Business Academy classmates. “And, we will produce solar-powered chargers for personal electronic devices like cell phones and computers.”

Jenna and her high school classmates in Long Beach, Calif. have been using an online business simulation tool to create virtual companies and transact business with other virtual enterprises run by students around the world.

“The venture capitalists we’ve met with were very encouraging,” Jenna says, describing the real-life investors to whom she and her classmates recently presented their business plans, with the hopes of attracting start-up capital for the business enterprise after graduation.

Courses on virtual enterprise like this are just one example of the rich, hands-on educational content offered to students in Long Beach Unified School District—the only school district in the country that has won The Broad Prize and then been a two-time finalist after its win.

In 2007, Long Beach students once again outperformed their peers in similar California districts in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology. The district’s low-income, African-American and Hispanic students also outperformed their peers in similar districts in reading and math at all grade levels. For example, in 2006, 35 percent of Hispanic students in Long Beach scored proficient on state standardized assessments in the elementary grades, compared to 30 percent statewide. Thirty-four percent of low-income students in Long Beach scored proficient in elementary school math in 2007, compared to 29 percent statewide.

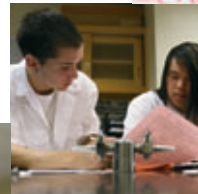
### Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction

Long Beach has maintained its status as a premiere urban school district, in part, because of its comprehensive standards-based curriculum, tightly aligned not only with state standards, but also with University of California and California State University admission requirements. With advanced curricular content and a real-world focus from kindergarten through graduation, Long Beach continues to propel its students—60 percent of whom qualify for free and reduced-price school lunch—toward college and challenging careers.

Teachers anywhere in the district know exactly what to teach, thanks to a common curriculum, core textbooks, district-designed instructional materials and recommended pacing guides for all grade levels and

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	29
Number of Schools	93
Number of Students	88,486
Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch	60%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	25%
Number of Teachers	4,270
Annual Budget (in millions)	\$758





subject areas. Long Beach pacing guides include a recommended sequence and duration for each unit, as well as suggested additional instructional materials that teachers can use to supplement the core texts.

Walk into any Long Beach classroom at any grade level or subject and you will see teachers modeling the outcomes that they expect from their students, asking questions to gradually lead students from familiar examples to new understanding, challenging them to work independently and checking for mastery before moving on—all elements of the district's required classroom instruction.

"In any part of the city, in an affluent school or a low-income school, instruction looks more alike than different," says Chris Dominguez, deputy superintendent of curriculum and professional development. "We have a common language in the system to talk about our craft. This has been the real key to our success."

### Professional Development Driven by Student Needs

It is a rare, cloudy spring day at Long Beach's Signal Hill Elementary, a school known locally as the "miracle on Walnut Avenue" for its dramatic turnaround in student achievement under Long Beach Superintendent Chris Steinhauser's tenure as a principal in the early 1990s.

Inside the art deco building nestled at the bottom of a California hillside, a group of fourth-grade students watches a classmate guide them through an afternoon math lesson.

On the board, the brave volunteer writes,  $(17-5) \times (4-2) =$ , and waits for her teacher's approving nod.

"OK, now walk us through it," says Marsha Duncan, a long-time teacher at Signal Hill.

The student works her way through the equation, quietly explaining each step on a dusty chalk board. As she writes the final number of her answer, the classroom erupts in applause.

"Great job," says Duncan. "Who's next?"

Duncan is engaging her students in the guided practice of advanced math concepts, applying techniques from the district-developed elementary math program, MAP2D. Three years ago, when the MAP2D pilot program was first expanded district-wide, the district faced the task of ensuring that Duncan and other elementary school teachers—who had been using different math programs for years—understood how to bring a new program alive in their classrooms.

"Even the very best curriculum and instructional strategies won't pay off for students unless teachers understand how to implement them in the classroom," says Lisa Isbell, the district's assistant director for curriculum, instruction and professional development. "That's where our professional development comes in."

Since 2001, Long Beach has used strategic, standards-based professional development driven by student results to improve teaching and increase learning opportunities for students. Each time the district rolls



out a new curricular program, teachers across the city receive training on strategies, resources and instructional techniques so they can successfully put the new approach in motion in their classroom. But these aren't just "one-shot" trainings, says Cheryl Joplin, a literacy specialist at Signal Hill Elementary.

"We'll attend one training at the start of the year, and then take what we've learned back to our classrooms," says Joplin. "In a few weeks, there is a follow-up training. And then another. It gives you an opportunity to try things out and come back for support and discussion."

District teams evaluated the effectiveness of MAP2D by observing classrooms and analyzing whether teachers were implementing 24 different program elements—such as introducing a "problem of the day" and setting aside time for student presentations—that had been found critical to the success of the program. The district's research office then married this analysis with student achievement data from interim math assessments, which showed that the program was indeed having a remarkable impact on student achievement. It narrowed the achievement gap between English language learners and English speakers, and between African-American students and their white peers after only one year of implementation. Also, between 2004 and 2007, elementary school proficiency rates in math increased by 16 points in the district.

"We've moved pretty far away from what I call 'smiley face' feedback," says Isbell. "What we use here is the meaty feedback that tells us whether new instructional strategies are actually increasing student achievement."



## Upward and Onward

Theodore was a special education student in middle school, the kind of child who, all too often, is jostled through the system and achieves mediocre academic results, at best.

Pamela Capkart, an English teacher at Milikan High School, first taught Theodore in the seventh grade. "When I moved to the high school," she says, "he was there with me again, and we got him involved in all of the college prep programs. I knew he could be successful with a little push."

With support from Capkart and other teachers, Theodore enrolled in AVID—a national program designed to prepare students for college—and several challenging Advanced Placement (AP) classes. "He passed all of them with the highest scores," says Capkart. "And last year, he got a full scholarship to Stanford University."

College is the expectation for Long Beach high school students. All middle and high school students meet annually with their counselor to review their achievement results, discuss areas in need of remediation and chart out courses needed for the following year. All Long Beach 10<sup>th</sup> graders are able to gauge whether they are prepared for higher education because the district requires—and subsidizes—each to take the PSAT. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, each student learns from the district whether he or she is ready for California State University enrollment requirements.

School and district leaders work with students to ensure that their senior year course schedules include rigorous courses to prepare students for the California State University entrance exam and college coursework in math and English. Once they reach their senior year, all Long Beach graduates who meet minimum college prep requirements are guaranteed admission to California State University at Long Beach, thanks to a new district-university partnership starting this year.

“The district has worked very closely with Cal State over the years to ensure that what we are teaching our students is aligned with what they will be learning in college,” says Michelle Kwansai, one of the district’s college and career advisors. “I think they feel confident that our students will be able to do the work once they get there.”

Long Beach high school students can also choose from dozens of AP courses that provide transferrable credits for college—everything from computer science to the performing arts— and many more have done so in recent years. Between 2003 and 2007, Long Beach student enrollment in AP courses increased by 58 percent. African-American students showed a 101 percent increase. Hispanic student participation rose 76 percent.

Through college readiness efforts and a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum beginning in elementary school, Long Beach has consistently increased Hispanic and African-American graduation rates and since 2003, has achieved an incredible 34 percent rise in overall college attendance.

As Tiffany Alexander, a history teacher at Millikan High School, says, “our goal from the time they start until they graduate is to ensure that all of our students in Long Beach can not only go to college, but that they can earn a degree and be successful in life.” ■ ■ ■

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## Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Inside the headquarters of the nation's fourth-largest school district, the conference room windows open to expansive views of some of Florida's most popular beaches. However, the 11 members of Miami-Dade County Public Schools cabinet gathered around a conference table are engrossed in their weekly strategy meeting, taking no notice of the tropical surroundings.

As a side door to the conference room opens abruptly, the district's director of assessment, research and data analysis, bursts in.

"The FCAT writing results came in!" she says, referring to the district's scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test—results that many districts either highly anticipate or dread.

The leaders quickly crowd around her laptop.

With an excited yelp, they celebrate the results: schools in Miami-Dade's "School Improvement Zone," a region comprised of the district's lowest-performing schools, did well for the third year running, making significant gains over the previous year.

In Zone schools and across the Miami-Dade district, low-income, African-American and Hispanic students are outperforming their peers in other Florida districts that serve students with similar income levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology. And for the third consecutive year, this three-time Broad Prize finalist has continued to narrow achievement gaps between low-income students and their non-low-income peers—by as much as 6 percentage points in middle school reading and math between 2004 and 2007.

"This is really the best example you'll find of our collaboration across departments," says Antoinette Dunbar, associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction. "Our team has been running the state's raw FCAT data, analyzing trends and outcomes. We have just received the list of our schools that made gains and those that declined in writing. By tomorrow morning, the district will have begun to deploy writing specialists and other resources to the classrooms that need the help the most."

### Score One for Miami-Dade

In a district with nearly 350,000 students and more than 22,000 teachers in 392 schools, along with more than 200 employees in the central office, former Superintendent Rudy Crew says the key to collaboration has been keeping all staff members focused on the same five strategic goals, united in their mission to improve learning opportunities for all students. Those goals are: academic achievement, global competition, parent and community engagement, reformed business practices, and recruitment and development of high-performing, diverse staff.

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size)	4
Number of Schools	392
Number of Students	347,774
Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch	59%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners	15%
Number of Teachers	22,393
Annual Budget (in millions)	\$6,000



But even clear goals are difficult to manage in a district of this size without central office systems to align school and district initiatives with the strategic plan and to provide channels for leaders at all levels to monitor progress.

To accomplish this, Miami-Dade uses balanced scorecards to set and monitor progress of school- and department-specific goals. For example, the district tracks the progress of low-performing students by monitoring each school's bottom quartile on its principal's scorecard. Similarly, regional superintendent scorecards measure progress in the region's bottom quartile.

Scorecard goals form the basis for annual evaluations and the awarding of financial incentives—up to 7 percent of an annual salary—for staff members who have a “perfect scorecard.”

“The scorecards make our evaluations less subjective, because you can quantify all of your results,” says Winston Whyte, principal at Howard D. McMillan Middle School.

To ensure that operations, budgeting and new academic programs are aligned with the district's strategic goals, a district-based computer system works in tandem with the scorecards to track progress across the district. On the system, principals can investigate trends in student performance, such as progress among third-grade students or English language learners over the course of the school year. Regional and district personnel use the system to track trends across segments of schools and the entire district.

With data and tools in place to monitor employee performance trends, budgetary deployment and student achievement, Miami-Dade's weekly cabinet meetings now focus on cross-department collaboration and practical strategies, rather than updates from teams in silos—positioning the district to rapidly dispatch resources in the way they were always intended: to respond to student needs.



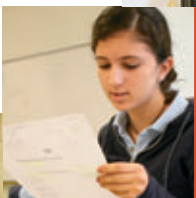
### Developing Teachers Who Put Data Into Action

In a ninth-grade algebra class at William Turner Technical Arts High School, students are wrapping up a unit on finances. Working in groups around clusters of desks, they are formulating a plan to pay off a hypothetical amount of credit card debt.

“Remember the formulas we reviewed yesterday,” says their teacher, Marshall Thomas. “How do you calculate compound interest?”

On the wall just behind Thomas hangs a colorful set of charts displaying student scores on the district's most recent interim assessment. Each chart shows the students' mastery of particular concepts, tracking their growth over the course of the year from red to green.

Thomas uses these evolving charts to guide his daily approach with students, revisiting, for example, interest and recursive functions when they have not yet mastered the concepts. Today, he has students who already understand these formulas working closely with those who do not.



Thomas' approach is the result of a district-wide effort that encourages teachers to use data to shape what happens in the classroom. Teachers receive results from district benchmark assessments in reading, language arts and mathematics three times a year in third grade through 10<sup>th</sup> grade within a few days on Miami-Dade's online portal. Teachers can also view a variety of student data online, including grades, test scores, attendance and discipline information for as long as the student has been enrolled in the district.

But Thomas' lesson plans are informed by more than just up-to-date data. Teachers throughout the district supplement their instructional toolbox with model lesson plans available through the online portal. The district also requires every school to set aside time for teachers to analyze and plan with data. Several times each month, teachers meet either by grade level or by subject area to analyze recent results and develop a strategy for addressing students' learning needs.

When data reveals that students are falling behind in certain subject areas, regional and district staff and school-based coaches are available in every school to help teachers change their teaching techniques to improve student learning.

"Coaches will look at the online data with a teacher and help them identify the best method to reach particular students—trying out a different lesson, breaking students into groups, or working with them one-on-one," says Adrian Hurley, a social studies teacher at Norland Middle School.

This multi-tiered support—from common planning time to online lesson plans—helps ensure that in Miami-Dade, teachers have both real-time data to help them understand students' strengths and weaknesses and dedicated time and resources to turn that data into action in the classroom.

### Effective Union-District Partnerships Can Improve Teaching and Learning

In the four short years after he arrived in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Crew, named the 2008 Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators, initiated sweeping reforms designed to reverse a history of neglect and dramatically increase student achievement. Two in particular—a secondary school reform initiative (SSRI), designed to complement core academic subjects at the high school level with intensive new workplace and career path studies, and the School Improvement Zone, an initiative that offers an extra layer of support to the district's lowest-performing schools—demanded substantial cooperation between district leaders and the local teacher's union to implement.

Teachers in SSRI schools work a longer school day. Teachers in the Zone participate in extra professional development and work a longer day and school year. They also receive a 20 percent bump in their salaries.



These terms are the kind that would stall reform in many other districts across the country. But in Miami-Dade, district and union leaders agreed that the changes promised necessary improvements in neglected schools, offered better working conditions for teachers, and had great potential to improve student learning. Together, they hammered out an agreement.

“We were at the table throughout the design of both the Zone and secondary school reform initiative,” says Fedrick Ingram, secretary of the United Teachers of Dade. “The district would like to take all the credit for the success we’ve seen, but they can’t. We’d like to take all the credit, too, but we can’t. It was truly a collaborative effort from beginning to end.”

Credit for the strong results from both initiatives clearly goes to both sides.

In schools that are participating in the SSRI, students have access to additional coursework that prepares them for work after graduation, as well as more opportunities to take credit recovery classes, additional electives and dual enrollment courses—so that they can graduate on time and earn college credit early.

Graduation rates are up in high schools across Miami-Dade. Student participation in AP tests continues to rise. In 2007, a record number of minority students took the SAT exam.

With results like these, leaders from both the district and the union have much to be proud of. As in any urban school district, union leaders, administrators and board members still have their share of disagreements. But their cooperation at the bargaining table in critical times has created the conditions for a greater professionalization of teaching in long-forgotten schools and a modernization of high school coursework that was long overdue. But most importantly—as is always the focus in Miami-Dade—students are the greatest beneficiaries. ■ ■ ■

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The Broad Prize Selection Jury is comprised of nationally prominent individuals from business and industry, government and public service. The Jury reviews the statistical data and site visit reports for each finalist district and chooses the winner of The Broad Prize.

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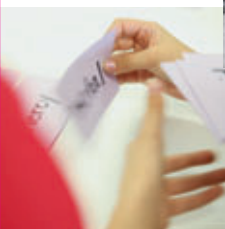
One of the nation's leading education research and consulting firms, Berkeley, Calif.-based MPR Associates manages the rigorous and comprehensive quantitative data collection and analysis process for The Broad Prize.

### SchoolWorks

SchoolWorks is an educational consulting company based in Beverly, Mass. Using a research-based rubric for district quality, SchoolWorks leads a site visit team of researchers and practitioners through the collection and analysis of interviews, documents and observations of Broad Prize finalist district practices.

### Public Impact

Public Impact is a national education policy and management consulting firm based in Chapel Hill, N.C. Drawing on the expertise of its staff of researchers and thought leaders, Public Impact compiles the data and best practices gathered by MPR Associates and SchoolWorks into publications that are shared with other Broad Prize-eligible districts.



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