The 2011 **Broad Prize**

CELEBRATING **A DECADE** OF EXCELLENCE
IN AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The $1 million Broad Prize, the nation's largest K-12 public education award given to urban districts, is awarded annually by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation to four school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing income and ethnic achievement gaps.

Seventy-five of the largest urban American school districts–serving more than 8 million students–are eligible for The Broad Prize each year. Graduating high school seniors in the winning district receive $550,000 in college scholarships; students in each of the three finalist districts receive $150,000 in scholarships.

sculpture © Tom Otterness, 2002

Our 10th Year

This year, we award the 10th Broad Prize for Urban Education. Over the last decade, we have seen little-known districts like the Brownsville Independent School District in Texas and Garden Grove Unified School District in California make meteoric gains in the face of great challenges to become Broad Prize winners. We have also seen well-known districts like the New York City Department of Education and Boston Public Schools prove that even the nation's largest, most urban districts can raise the achievement of poor and minority students.

While some districts have succeeded in sustaining measurable achievement gains, as seen in repeat Broad Prize finalists, others have struggled to maintain the momentum. No matter the outcome, each is proof that the challenge of educating all of America's children is not easy. It is a monumentally difficult task requiring transformative federal and state policies, groundbreaking innovation in teaching and learning, strong leadership and high-performing institutions. Without each of these key ingredients, the struggle to raise achievement levels for all children is magnified, if not impossible.

This year's finalists are no strangers to the struggle. They face some of the most daunting odds, but have demonstrated that academic success is possible and serve as a beacon of hope for districts across the country.

In Miami-Dade County and Ysleta, the vast majority of students are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch—70 and 81 percent, respectively. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 57 percent of students are either African-American or Hispanic, and in Broward County, 64 percent.

Despite historically challenged populations, the percent of African-American and Hispanic students performing at the highest achievement levels on state reading and math assessments in these finalist districts were among the top third of all districts in their respective states. Each finalist also made progress in closing academic achievement gaps between minority students and their white peers at the state level, as well as between low-income students and their non-low-income peers statewide.

And, in a nod to sustainability of achievement, all four 2011 Broad Prize finalists have previously been finalists.

We are proud to celebrate a decade of excellence in America's public schools.

Visit www.broadprize.org/10year to view our 10th anniversary video.

The 2011 Broad Prize Finalists

Broward County Public Schools
FLORIDA

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
NORTH CAROLINA

Miami-Dade County Public Schools
FLORIDA

Ysleta Independent School District
TEXAS

2002

Houston Independent School District

"Until we as a nation and as a people join with the Eli Broads across the country to make sure that no child is going to be left behind, the business of America is unfinished. Today we're reminded of both the opportunities for success and the challenges that are ahead."
–U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy, 2002 Broad Prize

2003

Long Beach Unified School District, California

2004

Garden Grove Unified School District, California

"A teacher recently asked me whether I thought it was possible to keep the magic of teaching alive while focusing on results. And, of course, I told her absolutely, and that I thought magic without results was really not very magical."
–U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, 2005 Broad Prize

2005

Norfolk Public Schools, Virginia

"Every school district here is a winner because you proved that you could do better, that all children can learn, and because you set a standard for others to follow. And maybe the most important thing that this prize has done is to ensure that you will actually get credit for having done what you were doing, and in the same process, inspire others to do the same."
–Former President William J. Clinton, 2006 Broad Prize

2006

Boston Public Schools

"The Broad Prize is one way to move us along, one way to set the example to all 100 districts and other districts around the country that we have no greater obligation to the future of our nation than to make sure that every single child gets the opportunity to live their dreams, the opportunity to reach out and touch the stars, to make sure that the next generation of Americans keeps moving this nation forward."
–Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, 2007 Broad Prize

2007

New York City Department of Education

2008

Brownsville Independent School District, Texas

2009

Aldine Independent School District, Texas

"Vote like your children's education depends on it, because it does. Hold politicians accountable. When they call something No Child Left Behind, make sure they don't mean some children. When they call something Race to the Top, make sure they don't mean anywhere near the middle. Hold them to the word 'top.'"
–Brian Williams, Anchor, NBC Nightly News, 2010 Broad Prize

2010

Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia

2011

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina

Broward County Public Schools

FLORIDA

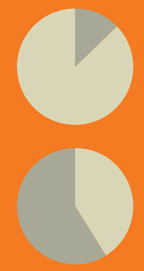
Derrick made his mark right away at Boyd Anderson High School—fighting, slacking off in class, giving his teachers lip. So early in his freshman year, when he walked into an assembly attended solely by African-American boys just like him, "I figured we were going to get kicked out," he says.

Actually, the students, whose first-quarter grade point averages were 2.0 or below, were being invited into a program called Mentoring Tomorrow's Leaders, which pairs high-achieving juniors and seniors with struggling underclassmen. Being sorted into a group of under-achievers stunned Derrick, and he signed up. He told his peer mentors he wanted a business degree one day, so they constantly reminded him—and eventually convinced him—that he wouldn't meet that goal unless he turned himself into a scholar. They taught him how to approach class: Sit up front, don't talk out of turn and do your reading, no matter what. They told him to apply topics he liked to the subjects he didn't: "If you're doing bad in math, think about money," "If you're doing bad in reading, read about something interesting to you." The group heard from successful professionals and toured colleges they'd never considered attending.

Annual Budget:
$1.98 billion

Rank Among U.S. School Districts:
#6

Number of Schools:
299



Students Designated as English Language Learners:
13%

Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch:
59%

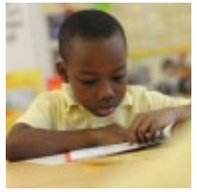
Number of Teachers:
15,870

Number of Students:
256,872

(above reflects 2010/11 school year data)

The program is one of many ways Broward County Public Schools, in and around Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has committed to focusing on all aspects of a student's development. The district, a three-time finalist for The Broad Prize, has made significant strides in moving students forward academically. The graduation rate has increased from 61 percent in 2005 to 67 percent in 2008, with an even more rapid gain of 9 percentage points, for African-American students. Even though more than two-thirds of Broward students are non-white, and nearly half come from poor families, the district matches or exceeds the state in test results in reading and math. The share of African-American students scoring at the highest achievement levels in reading, for instance, ranked in the top 10 percent of Florida districts in elementary and high school in 2010 and in the top 20 percent in math at all school levels.

"We believe that a lot of the academic achievement we've seen is looking at the child as a whole," says



Deputy Superintendent Joanne Harrison. One district administrator monitors children of deployed military service members, looking for signs of stress and connecting them with social services. In a district that serves students from 173 countries, educators are also taught about cultural differences that might inform instruction. In their home countries, for example, children might only have learned cursive and not block letters, or might have been taught to avoid eye contact.

Test scores are no longer considered in isolation; they are evaluated alongside attendance, behavior and other non-academic data, so that all the challenges a student faces can be addressed in an integrated way. Schools undergoing academic interventions receive help from a "learning support team." For example, when Lauderdale Lakes Middle School had problems with tardiness, the district's support team surveyed students and learned that those who were chronically late had nobody at home making sure they arrived to school on time. To demonstrate how big the problem was and to inspire them to take charge of correcting it, the students were shown graphs of their tardiness and were connected with mentors who helped keep them on track.

For Derrick, the focus on personal development has been indispensable. Nearly two years after joining the mentor program, he is reading black history novels, writing poetry in his spare time, and thinking up businesses he'll start one day. His GPA rose from 1.1 to a 3.2, and he's enrolled in honors classes. He has shown off his "Most Dedicated Mentee" trophy so much that it's all scratched up.

Tina Gibson, a math teacher at Boyd Anderson, says the changes in the mentored students are easily visible, from the pants (newly hitched up) to the language (no longer profane). "You can see the switch," she says. "It's so awesome. I love to see these young men making the decision that they want to be something in life."

Jim Notter, Broward's superintendent from 2007 until June 2011, had a Walt Disney quote displayed on a plaque in his office: "It's kind of fun to do the impossible." One such accomplishment was getting educators and students alike to believe that all children in the district—regardless of ethnicity, income level or family circumstance—are capable of achieving at high levels.

Advanced classes in Broward are no longer only for children who are already excelling. Every summer, Broward's assessment office provides high school principals a list of students who are likely to succeed in accelerated courses, based on attendance, discipline and grades. The district analyzes class schedules to make sure schools are properly scheduling the flagged students. As a result, the percentage of Broward juniors and seniors taking Advanced Placement tests increased 6 percentage points over the last three years.

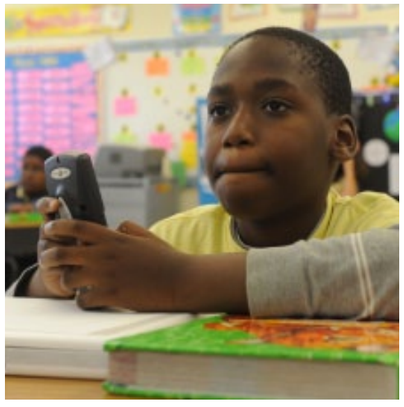
Researchers also keep track of whether students who need intensive remediation are being scheduled into the proper courses. Broward has many interventions for struggling students, selected from a detailed menu by school Response to Intervention (RtI) teams, sometimes with the assistance of a district RtI team.

That same kind of intense, data-driven needs assessment is used to get entire schools on the right track as well. Several months before the start of the new school year, the instructional review team helped leaders at Gulfstream Middle School set up a "war room," with lists of where the lowest-performing students stood in various subjects and a master calendar dotted with Post-It notes indicating every upcoming assessment and performance data review that would take place in the weeks and months ahead.

The plan for every week of the school year goes like this: By Monday, each school will have developed a customized test on upcoming benchmarks. By Thursday, every teacher will have given the test, studied results and worked with coaches to draft lesson plans, including individualized student interventions. The school's leaders, meanwhile, will focus on making sure the teachers get the training they need based on those benchmark results.

"I can't even begin to explain to you the level of comfort that I will have knowing this is already done and in place," Principal Brian Kingsley tells the five district employees gathered in the war room to help.

Broward's graduation rate has increased from 61 percent in 2005 to 67 percent in 2008, with an even more rapid gain of 9 percentage points, for African-American students.



"Not only that, every employee of this school will know what the expectations are. We're building that routine before we even get started."

The fifth-graders at North Fork Elementary School have a particularly enthusiastic science teacher, Miss Roshnia. She loves to plan and execute lessons about how to set up a proper plant-growing experiment or how mixtures of everyday objects can illustrate the concepts of homogeneity and heterogeneity. Most of all, she's excited about her students. "They're so entertaining," Miss Roshnia says. "And when they're learning, you just feel like you're really impacting somebody's life."

But Roshnia is not a real-life teacher—not yet. She is a sophomore at Stranahan High School and one of 339 future educators Broward is developing through its Urban Teacher Academy Program. The program recruits students—especially minorities, males and high achievers in math and science—for a course of study that includes class work and student-teaching throughout high school. As well, the program continues to mentor its participants as they proceed through college.

The program is part of a broader effort to improve the teaching pool in Broward's urban core. In 2000, the school system and local universities jointly developed a program to introduce prospective teachers to the needs of high-poverty schools and inspire them to pursue careers there. Two-fifths of the student teachers coming to Broward from the colleges are directed to 14 urban schools, where they get an especially heavy dose of support and supervision.

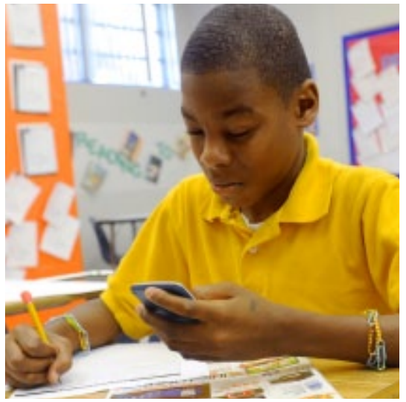
"Some of these teachers get in and think, I don't know if I want to be here, I don't know if my purse is safe," says Malease Marko Berg, a program coordinator. It doesn't take long for them to realize that the schools aren't the danger zones they imagined. More important, Berg says, "They end up realizing they can make huge gains with these kids." Once employed in Broward, teachers are provided a comprehensive weeklong orientation, their own instructional coach and monthly training sessions for all newcomers to a school.

In Broward, becoming a principal takes seven years of highly organized, rigorous training, starting with development as a teacher leader, then assistant principal, then intern principal, then interim principal. Once they are leading schools, principals continue to receive mentoring and work in professional learning communities that provide ongoing professional development and support.

In Broward, becoming a principal takes seven years of highly organized, rigorous training, starting with development as a teacher leader, then assistant principal, then intern principal, then interim principal.

All employees can look for improvement opportunities and best practices on the online Broward Enterprise Education Portal. Teachers from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade can find more than 10,000 vetted, standards-based lesson plans. A teacher looking for a hands-on lesson that gets kindergartners to show the number 6 using objects can click on one page of the portal to find a short video on teaching the concept of numbers to young children, detailed instructions on activities that use little bears and cars as counters, stories and games that reinforce the topic, modifications for children who have special needs (or are just moving faster or slower) and classroom assessments to measure whether the objective has been mastered. The teacher can use all of these tools—or none of them, if she's got a great lesson of her own.

LoriAyn Stickler, a kindergarten teacher who is getting a master's degree in educational technology, has watched the district's resources multiply over her 10 years at Hallandale Elementary School. "From where we were to where we've come? Tremendous growth," she says. The days of searching everywhere for detailed materials that have been shown to help kids like hers are over. "It's all there for me."



Teachers from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade can find more than 10,000 vetted, standards-based lesson plans on the online Broward Enterprise Education Portal.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

NORTH CAROLINA

2011
BROAD PRIZE
WINNER

In small groups throughout Sarah Robinson's classroom, eighth-graders discuss a Sylvia Plath poem, "Daddy." They're exercising basic skills—identifying allusions and figurative language—but also going deeper. The students challenge each other, energetically, on what inspired the poem, whether its prevailing theme is change or power and what the aggrieved writer truly thinks about her father.

They challenge their teacher, too.

"You're changing my mind," Robinson tells a boy named Terrell. "Characterize Sylvia and Sylvia's dad, and back it up with exact quotes from the text."

This level of critical thinking and engagement may be commonplace in elite schools, but that's not where Robinson teaches. She's at Albemarle Road Middle School, a high-poverty school on the east side of Charlotte, N.C.

Annual Budget:
$1.15 billion

Rank Among U.S. School Districts:
#18

Number of Schools:
178

Students Designated as English Language Learners:
10%

Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch:
53%

Number of Teachers:
8,565

Number of Students:
135,638

(above reflects 2010/11 school year data)

In the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), a three-time finalist for The Broad Prize, more than half of students live in poverty, and two-thirds are non-white. Yet high-level instruction is expected in all schools for all students. Achievement gaps have narrowed in reading and math in elementary, middle and high school. For instance, gaps between African-American and white students in high school reading narrowed by 11 percentage points from 2007 to 2010—in fact, CMS closed 100 percent of African-American achievement gaps across the board. The district is also pushing its students beyond proficiency. Statewide, 19 percent of low-income high school students score at the advanced level in math; in Charlotte, 29 percent do.

Key to this success is a sense of shared responsibility for all students. For Robinson, a 19-year veteran, this means serving as a Professional Development Master Teacher. She was chosen because of her success in increasing student achievement, and now her classroom is a laboratory of sorts. Each year Robinson coaches about eight teachers from around the district to become more effective, especially at integrating critical thinking into instruction.

A few miles away, for Jossalyn Richardson, a fourth-grade teacher at Winterfield Elementary School, this means planning nearly every day with her colleagues. They model lessons for each other and even swap students. That way the class next door learns about geometric transformations from Richardson by singing a catchy jingle, and her own class benefits from a lesson by her teammate about drawing inferences, an objective she struggles with.

In CMS, resources—not just funds, but people, too—go where they are needed most. Three years ago, Superintendent Peter Gorman began the Strategic Staffing Initiative, in which effective principals are asked to take charge of high-poverty, under-performing schools. They are allowed to bring an assistant principal, an academic coach and five teachers—such as Robinson, whose school is one of 25 that have been "strategically staffed"—and remove up to five others. Educators, all of whom must be proven exemplary at increasing student achievement, receive bonuses for taking on the new, challenging assignments.

Many of the selected principals hadn't worked at a high-poverty school before and hadn't expected to. The district set up the process, though, as not just a professional challenge but also "an honor to be selected," says Robinson's principal, Avery Mitchell.

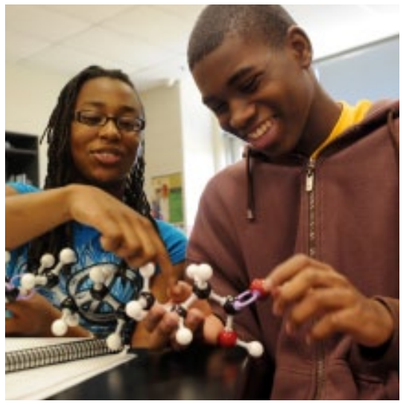
Gorman, who left the district in August 2011 after five years, says that placing the most effective educators with the neediest students is "the most powerful thing we've probably done." This does not just mean enticing people to move schools. Within every CMS school, principals are expected to match their top teachers to their lowest students.

So those honors students dissecting Sylvia Plath aren't the only ones Sarah Robinson insists answer high-level questions. She teaches a class of students who are working on grade level and uses the same literacy activities to study a simpler Maya Angelou poem. She also has a lower-level special education inclusion class that does the same with a Robert Kavanaugh poem. Robinson adjusts the materials for each group, but not her high expectations.

Two years ago, Chief Academic Officer Ann Clark asked principals to divide their teachers evenly into four quartiles—from most effective to least—based on their evaluations. Onto those lists she overlaid data measuring how much students learned under each teacher. She was concerned, though not surprised, at what she found: "It was a complete mismatch," Clark says. Teachers whose bosses considered them effective weren't necessarily the ones whose students had made great strides.

Since then, CMS has begun to change the culture of teacher evaluation by insisting that principals give more meaningful reviews, with student achievement at their core. When CMS needs to lay off teachers, those evaluations, rather than seniority, are the key factor in determining who is let go.

Statewide, 19 percent of low-income high school students score at the advanced level in math; in Charlotte, 29 percent do.



In addition, with the help of a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant, the district has been phasing in a system called Leadership for Educators' Advanced Performance, in which teachers receive bonuses for the academic growth of their students. Performance-based pay is controversial, so the district has been moving carefully with a pilot in 20 schools.

Teachers receive extra pay when their students show particularly high growth on state assessments. With the help of administrators, these teachers also design discrete "student learning objectives" to pursue. For example, a third-grade teacher might set a three-month goal of improving oral reading fluency for students below grade level. If the students make a predetermined amount of progress between the pre-test and post-test, the teacher earns a bonus. Since 2009, pilot schools have met approximately 85 percent of student learning objective performance goals.

The transformation of performance evaluation is just one of many ways CMS integrates data into decisions. All employees, whether in budget offices or kindergartens, are trained in Data Wise, a protocol for using assessment results and other outcome data to set priorities and act on them. No significant initiative is launched without a detailed plan laying out how it will be monitored—with measurable targets and an outside evaluation. And self-reflection goes beyond the numbers: Through School Quality Reviews, begun in 2008, evaluators assess learning by visiting classrooms, looking at the quality of student work and interviewing children, parents and staff.

Stacy White had been teaching for 20 years when her school, Mallard Creek High, was reviewed. The report hurt a bit: Students in Algebra I, which she taught, were falling short. Teachers were not giving the students enough responsibility for their own learning, nor were they promoting higher-level thinking—a shortcoming the review process highlighted across the district.

"After looking at the report, we said, 'We've got to change,'" White recalls. She and her colleagues began to have their students not just solve problems but write, in complete sentences, what they'd done and why. Classes were assigned more collaborative projects, followed by presentations where students described mathematical rules they'd discovered along the way. "We had them start figuring out why they were doing what they were doing," White says. "They would actually teach themselves."

Climbing to 90 percent is a goal the district considers so important that all CMS employees are evaluated on what they're doing to help achieve it. Clark set as her own goal an increase in the ninth-grade retention rate, so the zoned superintendents under her and principals under them are judged on that too. The evaluations of social workers are tied to the outcomes of the students in their caseloads, which isn't unusual. But a bus driver committing to help one specific

While there's still a ways to go, Charlotte's graduation rate as measured by the state has headed in the right direction: from 66 percent when the strategic plan was written in 2009 to 72 percent in 2011.

Before the review, White said, 74 percent of Mallard Creek's Algebra I students passed the end-of-course exam. That percentage increased to 84 percent in one year, and to 92 percent the year after that.

The engine behind CMS's improvement focus is its strategic plan. Gorman has overseen the development of two strategic plans, the most recent of which includes specific, aggressive goals to achieve by 2014: Get 90 percent of students on or above grade level. Ensure 100 percent of students achieve a year's growth in a year's time. Increase the graduation rate to 90 percent.

While there's still a ways to go, the graduation rate as measured by the state has headed in the right direction: from 66 percent when the strategic plan was written in 2009 to 72 percent in 2011.

teenager stay in school, and then being held accountable for whether that happens? That's pure Charlotte.

When Gorman was interviewing for the Charlotte job in 2006, he says he was asked, "What are you going to do now that we have sucked the soul out of teaching?" In preceding years, teachers had been given strict guidelines about not just what to teach, but precisely how to teach it. Teachers complained that the prescribed lessons were too rigid and detached from real-world learning. Students were progressing—to a point. Principals who got great results tended to be those breaking the rules. "There would almost be this black-market economy for great stories about people who did it their way and didn't tell the district office," Gorman said.

So he aimed to make innovation the rule. Certain elements were written in stone: standards that needed to be taught by a certain time, for example. But proven principals were officially given "freedom and flexibility" to customize instruction for their students, as long as they continued to demonstrate strong achievement results.

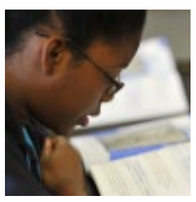
More than half of CMS principals have earned that status. "I had craved the opportunity to be able to design a program based upon the needs of the kids in my school, and not based on the district's initiatives," says Tonya Kales, principal of Ashley Park Elementary School.

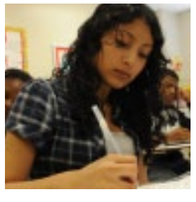
She threw out many traditional approaches to running an elementary school. Instead of heading their own classes, teachers are grouped in teams of six and have responsibility, collectively, for 100 children, who are placed in reading and math groups that vary in size and change as needed, based on students' progress. Teachers no longer work to the rhythm of a teachers' manual; assessments tell them which objectives their students need more help on, and during their four and a half hours of common planning time each week, they plot out how they'll teach them and get the training required to do so.

Like everything else in CMS, freedom and flexibility comes with accountability. The district has incorporated specific outcomes into administrator evaluations—parent survey results, student growth, graduation rates—and grown more assertive about removing people based on those ratings. If you don't get results, Kales says, "you can't turn and blame anybody. All we can do is look at ourselves."

So far the road built at Ashley Park looks very sound. On average, students at the high-poverty school, once designated by the state as a low performer, have made more than one and a half year's worth of learning gains in each of the last two years. And staff satisfaction, as shown through surveys, is on the rise.

"My teachers feel they're treated as professionals," Kale says. "They feel empowered to make a difference in the lives of our kids."





Miami-Dade County Public Schools

FLORIDA

At Jesse J. McCrary Jr. Elementary School in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood, Christine Rodriguez, a reading coach, sits down with Sonja Sibble, a soft-spoken fourth-grade teacher with more than a decade of experience.

"Good morning, Ms. Sibble," says the coach.
"Good morning, Ms. Rodriguez," says the teacher.

Then they launch into a conversation that exemplifies the deliberative work underlying the success of Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Page by page, Rodriguez and Sibble look at reading test results for Sibble's 21 students. For every skill—fluency, word analysis, figurative language—the two discuss which children need more help, which strategies worked, and which Sibble could try more of.

Twenty minutes in, they focus on a fourth-grader named Bracaya.

"Make sure to praise her for impressive scores in comprehension and word analysis," Rodriguez says. "Then talk to her about fluency, where her scores fell."

Annual Budget:
$4.66 billion

Rank Among U.S. School Districts:
#4

Number of Schools:
435

Students Designated as English Language Learners:
19%

Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch:
70%

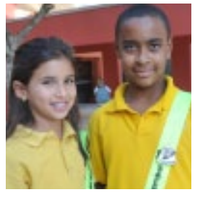
Number of Teachers:
20,322

Number of Students:
347,133

(above reflects 2010/11 school year data)

"The 41st percentile is not really reflective of her abilities," Sibble says. "Maybe she didn't take the test seriously." Rodriguez hands Sibble a list of activities that might motivate the girl. They agree that Bracaya might be having trouble staying focused throughout long reading passages and talk about ways to improve that.

In Miami-Dade, teachers conduct these "data chats" with every student, administrators conduct them with every teacher, and principals at underperforming schools undergo a similar process, called Data/COM, with their supervisors and district leaders. Educators at all levels in Miami-Dade have a clear idea of what they need to accomplish, and the metrics by which they will be held accountable.



"There is but one goal in our district: student achievement," says Alberto Carvalho, Miami-Dade's superintendent since 2008. By many measures, that goal is being met. The graduation rate in Miami-Dade, a four-time Broad Prize finalist, rose 5 percentage points over four years. The district's students—nine in 10 of whom are non-white and nearly two-thirds of whom are poor—are also making gains achieving the highest levels on the state assessment. From 2007 to 2010, for example, the share of low-income high school students scoring a 4 or 5 on the state math test, the highest scores, rose 10 points, compared to 6 points statewide.

After Sibble's data chat with her coach, she heads to her classroom and calls Bracaya, who is dressed in blue and red for Haitian Flag Day, over to a table.

"Okay, Bracaya," Sibble says. "From the reading test we did two weeks ago, these are your results. In testing period one, you were at the 50th percentile. In the second testing period, what do you notice?"

"I dropped."

"You dropped a little bit, but look what happened in the third testing period."

When Bracaya sees that she hit the 76th percentile, she raises an eyebrow and smiles slightly. "I jumped a lot." Sibble talks with Bracaya about how they'll work on analyzing words, and how she'll search the types of books Bracaya likes—mysteries and humor—for passages that get gradually longer, to build her reading stamina.

Sibble writes these plans on a form for Bracaya's progress folder and tells her she has improved a lot this year. "But," Sibble asks, "are we going to just relax here, or are we going to strive?"

"I could try harder," Bracaya says quietly, and signs the form in a lovely script.

Miami-Dade schools had been steadily improving academically, earning the distinction of Broad Prize finalist in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The district, however, was on the verge of a $100 million budget gap, as well as state receivership when Carvalho arrived. He convened a panel of influential local business leaders to not only support the schools, as is common, but also to advise him on management and the budget. He took administrators on field trips to study the business practices of companies like Apple and Dell. Over the course of three years, the district cut central office spending in half, sending administrators back into schools to work directly with students. The district took over its health insurance, renegotiated textbook contracts, found savings in food services, and took other measures to restore financial reserves without laying off teachers.

Carvalho looked to all sorts of stakeholders—from parents to philanthropists, from arts leaders to union leaders—for input into the system's priorities and strategic plan. At the same time, district leaders worked to convince the community, including a once-turbulent school board, that in a system that straddles the richest and poorest of society, *all* students are everyone's responsibility.

Part of garnering strong buy-in for reform was paying attention to demand. The district signed compacts promising to deliver to specific municipalities the programs their parents wanted, such as International Baccalaureate and environmental science. And Carvalho expanded school choice options so they would be spread evenly throughout the system. Now Miami-Dade has one of the most comprehensive public school choice programs in the nation, comprising magnet schools, charters, career academies, single-sex schools and more. Two in five Miami-Dade students now actively select their schools.

One high school junior named Sebastian chose iPrep Academy, which blends virtual and face-to-face instruction. With half his classes online and a chunk of every day spent in an internship with Superintendent Carvalho, Sebastian is learning to manage his time. "It's a very comfortable environment, and it makes you feel kind of adult," he says. "It gives you a hint of college."

Raquel attends eighth grade at G.W. Carver Middle School, an international studies magnet where on a recent day students in an Italian class put the final touches on an opera they had written, and students in a German class displayed research projects on ancient Rome. There was not a word of English heard or seen in those classes, nor in many of the school's math classes either. Raquel and her classmates have spent the year weighing high schools for the sciences, architecture and the arts, as well as traditional campuses. It's hard to choose. Groups of friends split up, and bus rides can be long—hers is an hour each way.

The district works to ensure that parents of Miami-Dade schoolchildren, 19 percent of whom are English language learners, are involved in their children's education, no matter the language barriers.

Jennifer Wollman, the mother of two students who graduated from the system and one who is about to, says, "It's almost like being in a grocery store for education for your kid, where you can really tailor their education."

The district works to ensure that parents of Miami-Dade schoolchildren, 19 percent of whom are English language learners, are involved in their children's education, no matter the language barriers. Listeners to Haitian and Hispanic radio hear regularly from school system officials, including the superintendent, on topics such as scholarships and testing. At two resource centers in low-income neighborhoods, district employees provide school supplies and teach English and computer literacy.

An online portal allows parents to keep track of their children's academic progress and even their nutritional habits. "If they don't turn in their homework, we know it," says Rubens Cuza, who follows his children, a fourth-grader and an eighth-grader. "I know what my kid buys for lunch. If he got a cookie that day, I know he got a cookie. And if he got a B on his paper, I also know it."

In 2008, the state of Florida was threatening to close several high schools in the district, including Miami Edison, or turn them over to private operators. The school system vowed to turn around those schools itself. Edison had been rated an "F" school by the state for a decade. Ninety percent of the mostly Haitian student body was reading below grade level.

The school began requiring Freshman Foundations, a class that combines study skills with intensive reading instruction, and appointed a "graduation coach" to track each senior's test scores, grades and risk factors. Based on that information, educators engage the students in data chats so specific that when they see a certain objective on the board, they know it is a weakness and that they should perk up their ears.

But the foundation of the turnaround efforts at all the district's lowest-performing schools was laid through changes to teaching practice. In a blitz of hiring, teachers for those schools were handpicked from elsewhere in Miami-Dade and from other counties. District administrators monitored classrooms closely. Agreements with the teachers union allowed for stricter

In one year, Edison's graduation rate increased 20 points.

First, the entire administrative staff was replaced. The new principal, Pablo Ortiz, set about to change the school's culture, making college the focus. "For too many years, the conversation here had been, 'Well, we hope that you graduate,'" Ortiz says. "We wanted to change the conversation to 'You will graduate, and what are your plans going to be after graduation?'" Ortiz called himself the provost and his administrators deans and required that teachers post their college names and degrees on their classroom doors. At the same time, he restored elements that made high school look and feel like high school, such as varsity jackets and pep rallies.

requirements about curriculum delivery and common planning in the turnaround schools.

In one year, Edison's graduation rate increased 20 points. The library circulation tripled; the amount of college scholarships offered to students doubled, then nearly doubled again. All of the Miami-Dade high schools rated an "F" grade by the state of Florida in 2008 improved their grade by 2010, including Edison, which moved to a "C." That "C," Ortiz says, is fragile. So it is reassuring for him that in Miami-Dade, when schools improve, the supports stay in place—as does the scrutiny.

All of the Miami-Dade high schools rated an "F" grade by the state of Florida in 2008 improved their grade by 2010, including Edison, which moved to a "C."

The principals of the turnaround high schools gather one morning in a conference room at the central office for a Data/COM meeting with Carvalho and other high-level staff. Data from each school is printed in a packet and projected on a screen as the principals lay out what they are doing to get at-risk students to graduate—including strategies they've learned from each other at meetings like this one. When it's Ortiz's turn, he and the superintendent discuss which teachers should be replaced, which strategies might be considered for the new school year, and whether the school will retain its momentum.

"It's been a challenge," Ortiz tells the assembled team, "but I think we're going to be on the right path."

Ysleta Independent School District

TEXAS

With their students in physical education class, the first-grade teachers of Ramona Elementary School consult their laptops in a quiet classroom and discuss the children who need the most help. One girl has been tardy or sick 22 times; another, the data show, still has difficulty with word endings. They would both benefit from summer school, the teachers agree. Veronica Herrera says she is having trouble keeping one boy focused. Maria Arellano suggests she try the "rally coach" strategy, where he can practice skills with an encouraging friend, or have him read aloud and then paraphrase what he's read.

Arellano and Herrera have different teaching styles, their students have different needs, and, because of their school district's dual language program, they teach in entirely different languages—Arellano in Spanish and Herrera in English. But when they meet as a professional learning community for 75 minutes each week, they are speaking the same language. Throughout the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, Texas—within walking distance to Juarez across the Mexico border—teachers in this second-time Broad Prize finalist district are given ample time and support to collaborate on raising the academic achievement of students.

Annual Budget:
$445.2 million

Rank Among U.S. School Districts:
#114

Number of Schools:
61

Students Designated as English Language Learners:
24%

Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch:
81%

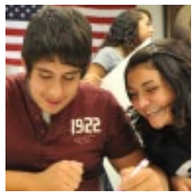
Number of Teachers:
3,068

Number of Students:
44,746

(above reflects 2010/11 school year data)

The shared focus is paying off with a narrowing of the achievement gap—among the smallest in Texas. In 2010, after years of rapid academic growth, Ysleta students, nearly one-quarter of whom are English language learners and four-fifths of whom come from low-income families, caught up to the state's reading proficiency rates in elementary, middle and high school. In math proficiency, they surpassed their peers across Texas.

In Ysleta, teams of teachers create common student assessments together, share successful instructional strategies and discuss the progress of individual children. That process is made easier by DataMart, one of the most user-friendly, effective web portals in the nation created by the district in 2006 to provide real-time, longitudinal achievement data. On each of the Ramona teachers' customized "dashboards," a line chart illustrates the dips and swells of class-wide attendance, a bar chart shows each student's standing, and a speedometer marks the class-wide GPA.



After discussing student interventions, the Ramona teachers move on to science, searching on DataMart for questions to include on an upcoming test on motion and energy. They consider an item about how a goldfish's bubbles move. But what if the children have not seen a real fish? Maybe they could substitute Sprite, and view the bubbles in a glass of soda to make the concept real?

Herrera asks, "How can we give our students the opportunity to be successful?"

With their emphasis on collaboration and close attention to student progress indicators, Ramona teachers are certainly finding a way. In 2010, the percentage of students at the school who met Texas standards exceeded the state's rate in every subject, even though 85 percent of them live in poverty.

"How can we give them the opportunity to be successful?" is a question Ysleta leaders ask about their employees as well. Teachers receive frequent classroom visits from principals and district administrators—who do 144 walkthroughs a year—followed by constructive feedback they can pull up online nearly instantly. Professional development opportunities are tailored specifically to the needs at hand. Last year, for example, district instructional specialists showed the Ramona first-grade teachers how to use graphic organizers to help students focus their thought processes, the school's reading specialist demonstrated new approaches to dyslexia, and, when data showed sluggish math scores, coaches modeled effective lessons and helped develop interventions.

Ysleta is financially sound, with general fund reserves that have climbed to $82 million, about two months' worth of operating costs.

Teachers are not pulled from their classrooms during the day for professional development. Training occurs on early release days, Saturdays, during planning time and over two days in the summer, in exchange for two extra days off at Christmas. This swap, called "Holiday Exchange," reduces the reliance on substitute teachers, which is good for instruction and for the budget.

In Ysleta, under the leadership of Superintendent Michael Zolkoski, every dollar is watched closely. Principals receive reports each week on where their finances stand; they are expected to come in under budget, in case unexpected needs arise. Zolkoski personally signs off on every school purchase order above $1,000. "Dr. Z audits us like there's no tomorrow," says Rick Lopez, an area associate superintendent.

This strict management of resources—along with teacher attrition, a shift in the fiscal year, aggressive searching for grants and cost-cutting measures—means that at a time when other districts are laying off teachers and slashing programs, Ysleta is financially sound, with general fund reserves that have climbed to $82 million, about two months' worth of operating costs.

First thing in the morning at Parkland High School, a voice comes over the public address system reciting the district's mission statement in a quick and confident clip: "All students who enroll in our school will graduate from high school, fluent in two or more languages, prepared and inspired to continue their education at a four-year college, university or institute of higher education so that they become successful citizens in their community."

Two years ago, the young woman at the microphone didn't think that statement had much to do with her. Now, it defines her life. Tina came to Parkland as a sophomore, after she left foster care and moved in with a cousin. She ditched lots of classes and got lousy grades. Then a counselor from

Communities in Schools, a program in more than 30 Ysleta schools, reached out. She told Tina that if she couldn't concentrate, she could come to the office to refocus. Each day she cut class, the counselors found her the next day for a chat. If her grades fell, they got her tutoring. If she was out for a doctor's appointment, they made sure she had the proper class notes.

Now Tina, the student council secretary, is about to graduate with A's and B's, has been admitted to Sul Ross State University and won a $5,000 scholarship from the Ysleta Educational Foundation, funded by community partners and district employees. "I wanted to be the first one in my family to graduate and go on to college and make something out of myself," says Tina, who plans to be a psychologist. "I want to be able to help someone who has the same problems I did."

In a community where many parents have not attended college, Ysleta has worked hard to make higher education a natural aspiration, and a reality. At Tina's school, for example, the principal has arranged for a van to round up every student who hasn't yet taken the SAT for the test administration on an upcoming weekend. Tina found out about

the scholarship she eventually won from her school's Go Center, where a dedicated staffer helps students with college applications and connects them to financial aid—$6.4 million in scholarship and financial offers in 2010, a nearly tenfold increase in recent years. Ysleta provides financial assistance for PSAT and SAT fees, and at some schools, a Princeton Review instructor teaches a free preparatory course that normally costs $1,200.

In most Texas school districts, the phrase "Friday night lights" evokes football. In Ysleta, it just as likely refers to tutoring. Every Ysleta teacher is expected to tutor, and even Superintendent Zolkoski teaches an algebra camp for two weeks each summer. Help is available before, during and after school, as well as on Saturdays.

And while in some school districts vocational schools are an alternative to a rigorous academic program, in Ysleta, where every high school offers workforce training along certain career pathways, vocational education supplements academic rigor. At Bel Air High School's Center for Health Professionals, for example, the same students who learn to prepare sterile IVs, make dental molds and administer CPR leave school not just with professional licenses but also a full complement of Advanced Placement credits.

"We're not looking at our students just to graduate from high school," says school board trustee Andy Ramirez. "We want to be the shoulder to catapult them to something big."

Since 2007, the district has implemented a monitoring system called No Senior Left Behind for students who are still struggling at the end of high school. From the start of 12th grade, counselors and administrators aggressively monitor student-by-student progress toward graduation requirements and provide the necessary coaching and resources to help seniors complete their coursework. Through a district-wide taskforce, they share intervention strategies. The number of Ysleta seniors who don't graduate on time has decreased fivefold since the program began, and the average graduation rate has increased 8 percentage points between 2007 and 2010, to 80 percent.

Five weeks before school ends, a senior named Kristin is sitting in a computer lab, using a virtual credit-recovery program called Education2020 to make up a geometry class she failed sophomore year. "I just can't wait for graduation," she says. Neither can her counselor, Teresa Rivera, who across the school is paging through spreadsheets that track

The number of Ysleta seniors who don't graduate on time has decreased fivefold since the program began, and the average graduation rate has increased 8 percentage points between 2007 and 2010, to 80 percent.

the graduation requirements still missing for Kristin and the four other at-risk seniors she is responsible for. Rivera's five seniors need community service hours, an online makeup class, a passing grade on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills or all of the above.

Rivera speaks with Kristin, her other seniors and their parents several times a week to make sure that every possible obstacle will be surmounted. "I'm watching their grades and progress, I'm watching everything," Rivera says. "If I see something wrong, I'm bringing them in and talking to them. They're not going to slide by."

THE BROAD PRIZE

Selection Jury

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.

Henry Cisneros
Chairman, CityView America
Former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Susan Hockfield
President,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Shirley Ann Jackson
President,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Roderick Paige
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Richard Riley
Partner, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Margaret Spellings
Executive Vice President,
National Chamber Foundation
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Andrew Stern
Senior Research Fellow,
Georgetown Public Policy Institute
President Emeritus, Service Employees International Union

THE BROAD PRIZE

Review Board

A distinguished group of the country's top education leaders serves as the review board for The Broad Prize. Review board members examine performance indicators, demographic statistics and other information about the urban school districts that are eligible for The Broad Prize. Based on their examination, the review board narrows the list of 75 eligible school districts to the four finalists.

Anne L. Bryant
Executive Director,
National School Boards Association

Carl A. Cohn
Clinical Professor of Urban School Leadership, Claremont Graduate University
Former Superintendent,
San Diego Unified School District
Former Superintendent,
Long Beach Unified
School District, Calif.

Christopher Cross
Chairman, Cross & Joftus
Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education

Jo Lynne DeMary
Former Superintendent of Public Instruction,
State of Virginia

Charles Desmond
Chairman, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

Dan Goldhaber
Research Professor and Editor,
Education, Finance and Policy
Center on Reinventing Public Education,
University of Washington

Peter Groff
President/CEO, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Jane Hannaway
Director, Education Policy Center,
Urban Institute

Eric Hanushek
Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow,
Hoover Institution of Stanford University

Karen Hawley Miles
Executive Director and Founder,
Education Resource Strategies

Phyllis Hunter
President, Phyllis C. Hunter Consulting, Inc.

Sandy Kress
Partner, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Deborah McGriff
Partner,
NewSchools Venture Fund

Thomas W. Payzant
Professor of Practice,
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Former Superintendent,
Boston Public Schools

Delia Pompa
Vice President for Education,
National Council of La Raza

Nina Rees
Senior Vice President, Strategic Initiatives,
Knowledge Universe

Margot Rogers
Vice Chairman and Senior Advisor,
The Parthenon Group

Roger Sampson
President,
Education Commission of the States

John Simpson
Education Consultant,
JOS Simpson and Associates
Former Superintendent,
Norfolk Public Schools, Va.

Elisa Villanueva Beard
Chief Operating Officer,
Teach For America

Gene Wilhoit
Executive Director,
Council of Chief State School Officers

THE BROAD PRIZE

Partners

MPR Associates
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.

RMC Research Corporation
RMC Research Corporation is a nationally recognized research and professional services organization. Using a research-based rubric for district quality that was developed exclusively for The Broad Prize, RMC 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.

Linda Perlstein, Project Journalist
Broad Prize Project Journalist Linda Perlstein was most recently public editor for the Education Writers Association. Previously, she was an education writer at The Washington Post. She is the author of "Not Much Just Chillin': The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers," a New York Times best seller, and "Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade." Perlstein has also written for The Washington Post and Baltimore Sun op-ed pages, The New York Times Book Review, Slate, Salon, The Nation, The American Prospect, Columbia Journalism Review, Family Circle, Girls Life and Parents.

Photos: Diane Bondareff Design: AdamsMorioka, Inc.

www.broadprize.org

the broad prize for urban education

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation
10900 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90024
T 310.954.5050
F 310.954.5051
broadprize@broadfoundation.org
www.broadprize.org