



**Overview of the District**

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size):	87
Number of Schools:	66
Number of Students:	49,809
Number of Teachers:	2,098
Avg. years teaching experience / with the district:	11.5 / 11.3
Annual Budget:	\$421.4 million

Superintendent: Dr. Laura Schwalm (Appointed May 1999)

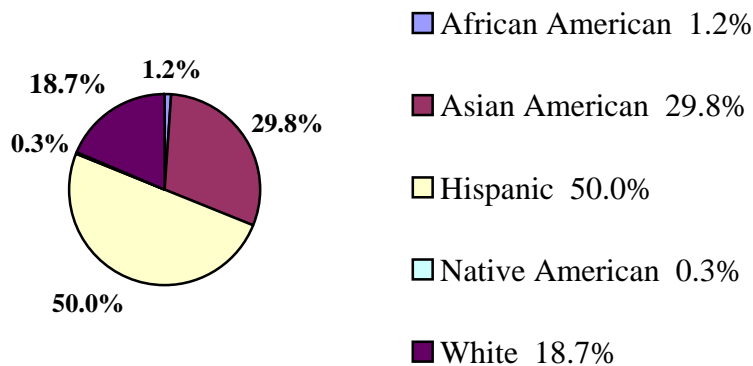
Governance: Elected Board  
Five members elected at large to serve four-year terms  
Non-voting student representative elected by high school students

Teacher Unions: Garden Grove Education Association (Local)  
California Teachers Association (State)  
National Education Association (National)

**Student Characteristics**

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price School Lunch:	59%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners:	50%
Graduation Rate:	78%

**Student Demographics**





## **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Meeting Federal No Child Left Behind Requirements**

- In 2004, 94% of Garden Grove's schools met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets as identified by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, which requires that schools meet performance targets for students in all significant subgroups (e.g. ethnicity, income, language and disability).

### **Improving Overall Reading and Math at Every School Level**

- **Reading:** The percentage of elementary students who reached proficiency in reading increased by 9 percentage points in the past three years. In middle school, the improvement was 6 percentage points, and in high school it was 9 percentage points.
- **Mathematics:** The percentage of elementary students who reached proficiency in math increased by 17 percentage points in the last three years. In middle school, the increase was 7 percentage points, and in high school, it was 1 percentage point.

### **Reducing Achievement Gaps across Ethnic and Income Groups**

- Garden Grove has ethnic and income achievement gaps that are significantly smaller than the California State average, according to the Council of Great City Schools.
- Garden Grove showed reductions in white/Hispanic achievement gaps in the following categories: elementary reading (5 percentage points), middle school reading (4 percentage points), high school reading (7 percentage points), elementary math (2 percentage points), and high school math (6 percentage points).

### **Graduation Rates**

- Garden Grove's current graduation rate is 78%, based on the respected Manhattan Institute methodology of calculating graduation rates. The national average reported by the College Board is 70%. Garden Grove showed a 6 percentage point reduction in the graduation rate gap between Hispanic students and white students. The graduation rate of Hispanic students increased more than 8 percentage points between 2000 and 2003. More than 80% of Garden Grove's seniors continue their education after graduation.

## **RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES**

### **Curriculum and Academic Goals**

- Instead of a simple letter grade, standards-based report cards in grades K-6 detail the specific skills that students are required to master each year, such as vocabulary, reading comprehension or multiplication/long division. At the start of the school year, parents are given copies of these standards so that they understand what their child is expected to learn that year. Report cards are given out three times a year in December, March and June. In addition, a goal-setting conference is held in October so teachers and parents can discuss the grade level standards and determine if additional student support or interventions will be necessary. A second conference in the spring allows parents and teachers to check in on the progress that has been made.

- Garden Grove is an example of standards-based education at its best. The district has worked to ensure that its curriculum, standards and assessment tools all are in alignment with state academic standards. Working with teams of teachers, administrators and outside consultants, Garden Grove divided state standards into more detailed “focus standards” to guide the district in meeting specific academic performance goals. The district then developed curriculum guides and instructional strategies for teachers to use in their classrooms. Pacing guides, which outline what should be taught at what times throughout the year, also help to ensure consistency for students. The district also developed quarterly student assessments rather than just one assessment at the end of the year. This allows teachers to adjust their curriculum throughout the school year or provide specialized help to students who are not keeping pace.

### **Staff Selection and Capacity Building**

- The district aggressively recruits teachers and has a rigorous selection process that includes a minimum of three rounds of interviews. In the past two years, the District received more than 11,500 applications for 420 teaching positions. That makes the Garden Grove district more selective than Harvard Law School (last year only 7 percent of applicants were accepted to Harvard). The district believes this high degree of selectivity has increased the pool of highly qualified teachers by enhancing the district’s reputation among professionals. Once hired, the District supports teachers with attractive compensation packages, an attractive union contract, a strong professional development program for which they are paid to attend, support from principals and other teachers, and coaches specifically assigned to help new teachers.

### **Instructional Programs, Practices and Arrangements**

- The district does not make arbitrary decisions about which programs or practices to adopt. Instead, GGUSD conducts pilot studies in all subject areas for new programs under consideration. For example, prior to adopting a new language arts curriculum, the district piloted the curriculum in 70 classrooms. At each grade level, five control classrooms used the existing curriculum, and five classrooms used the proposed new curriculum. The district conducted pre- and post-tests for each group and consulted with all pilot and control group teachers as part of their data-based decision-making process.

### **Use of Data**

- The district has recently adopted a customized data management system that allows educators to create reports that show student achievement data in each classroom. Instead of waiting for test scores to arrive months after their students have left their classrooms, teachers can access test results online within 72 hours of testing. This allows them to immediately use this information to adapt their instructional practices and improve student achievement.

### **Interventions and Adjustments**

- To ensure struggling students are reading at their appropriate grade level, the district recently implemented the School Wide Intervention Model (SWIM). Students who are reading below level are grouped together for intensive uninterrupted two-hour instructional blocks. Students are assessed frequently to monitor and adjust their programs.

**Stability of Leadership**

- Dr. Laura Schwalm has been superintendent for five years and has been with the district a total of 31 years.
- The average tenure of teachers in the district is more than 11 years. Nearly one in four teachers has more than 20 years' experience.

**Other Factors**

- Nearly three-fourths of the families with students in the district speak a language other than English as their first language. The district supports these families by providing all written materials in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. Translators are present at all school events and during visits to families.
- The district has been recognized for its efficiency and conservative fiscal policies, operating on a very lean management structure in which only a small percentage of the budget is directed to overhead and administration. The district devotes a greater share of its budget to direct classroom services than any district in the state. School site administration accounts for 5.8% of total expenditures, and only 3.8% of the budget is spent on central office administration.