

The 2006 Broad Prize for Urban Education





2006 Broad Prize Finalist Districts

- Boston Public Schools
- Bridgeport Public Schools
- Jersey City Public Schools
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- New York City Department of Education

On the Cover

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

What does success in urban education look like?

Success looks like a Broad Prize school district. The \$1 million Broad Prize in Urban Education is the nation's largest award in K-12 public education. The Broad Prize is given annually by The Broad Foundation in the form of scholarships to urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students.

One hundred large urban school districts serving more than 9 million students nationwide are eligible. Five standouts are selected each year as finalists.

One district takes home The Broad Prize. Yet all are winners and have powerful stories to tell.

Boston Public Schools
Bridgeport Public Schools
Jersey City Public Schools
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
New York City Department of Education

A scenic view of the Boston skyline across a body of water. In the foreground, several sailboats with white sails and red numbers (10, 4, 6, 1) are racing. A rowing team in a long boat is also visible. The background features a dense urban landscape with various skyscrapers under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

Boston Public Schools



Boston Public Schools

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size) _____ 67
Number of Schools _____ 145
Number of Students _____ 57,900
Number of Teachers _____ 4,733
Annual Budget _____ \$712.4 million

For more information

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Before the school day begins, first-grade teacher Mary Costello sits in a classroom with other Winship Elementary teachers and holds up a color-coded data chart showing which classes had trouble on a recent math test. The teachers – from across grade levels – vigorously discuss the root causes of learning barriers, comparing teaching approaches that might be more effective in reaching students. They decide on a collective plan to reinforce math vocabulary across grades in future lessons and agree to test several approaches in “labs” with students.

Years ago, such a meeting of teachers might have been filled with talk of fire drills or administrative paperwork. But those days are over in Boston Public Schools.

All across the district, teachers have thrown open their classroom doors and invited in peers, coaches and principals to engage in what former Boston Superintendent Tom Payzant calls “collaborative teaching and learning.”

That practice, where educators work with coaches and one another to frequently adjust their teaching methods to

best suit students’ learning – and the resulting improvement in student achievement – has helped to make Boston the only district in the country to be a five-time finalist for The Broad Prize.

Each school year from 2002 through 2005, using The Broad Prize methodology, Boston has consistently outperformed other Massachusetts districts with similar low-income populations in six out of six areas (elementary, middle and high school, reading and math). In addition, Boston has demonstrated greater improvement in five out of six areas by African-American students than its peer districts in the state. Boston also has seen a stark increase in the number of Advanced Placement mathematics and English exams taken by Hispanic and African-American students, up 237 percent and 78 percent, respectively, since 2002.

“We have more evidence with each passing year that collaborative teaching and learning based on data gives teachers a ‘laser-like focus’ to improve learning,” says Payzant, who retired in June 2006 after 11 years at the helm.

Data-driven teaching is a group sport

In the last decade, Boston has aligned its curriculum with state standards – among the toughest in the country – and introduced assessments, pacing guides and professional development aligned with that curriculum.

In recent years, teaching in Boston has increasingly become a group sport. Teachers, with the benefit of data, coaches, model lessons and research-based best practices, now collaborate across classrooms, across grades and across disciplines.

“It’s like having a miner’s light, going across all levels and looking for opportunities to collaborate,” says Kathi Mullin, who works as special assistant to the superintendent on high school reform.

To support teachers, the district makes student achievement data available online, providing interactive graphs linked to test questions on the district’s website, www.mybps.org.

“We look at the data in a thousand different ways,” says Francisco Garnica, dean at East Boston High School. “How are the teachers meeting the needs of the kids? That is the most important thing to me.”

Teachers report that data allows them to accurately assess student progress, determine problem areas and develop strategies to take those students to higher levels of achievement.

“Now my kids cheer when we do math assessments,” says Costello. “I explain: ‘This is your chance to show me what you know.’”

Small learning communities

What do Boston high schools and the television show “Cheers” have in common? Boston high schools believe that students, like Cheers clientele, want to go to school where “everybody knows your name.”

In recent years, the district has reconfigured Boston high schools in two ways: into smaller schools and into small learning communities called “houses.” At East Boston High, where nearly all of the 1,400 students live below the poverty line and some in foster homes, teachers explain that “houses” are like “families.”

“We make the kids feel as if they are part of a family

and provide structure they may not get at home,” says Philomena Rago, a teacher at East Boston.

The 350 students in each “house” have most of the same teachers and counselors for all four years of high school and can seek academic and emotional help from many adults. Once a week the team of “house” teachers meets to discuss how to improve student learning, sometimes bringing together students and parents to talk through behavioral or academic issues. Principals and teachers credit this “house” team planning and discussion about improving student performance with creating a professional culture that allows teachers to raise the level of their own individual practices.

The small learning communities approach is one of the most recent additions to the arsenal of strategies Boston has deployed to raise student achievement in high schools across the city. Between 2002 and 2005, high school achievement gaps for African-American students and low-income students have closed faster than the state average.

Clearly, for the notable and sustained progress this five-time Broad Prize finalist district has shown, everybody does know its name.



A photograph of a white, conical lighthouse with a black lantern room, situated on a small, rocky island. The lighthouse has three small, square windows. To the left of the lighthouse, there are some bare trees. In the foreground, there is a body of blue water with a yellow and blue buoy. In the background, the ocean extends to the horizon under a clear blue sky. A few people are visible sitting on the rocks near the lighthouse. A red buoy is visible in the distance on the right.

Bridgeport Public Schools

Bridgeport Public Schools

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size) _____ 291
Number of Schools _____ 36
Number of Students _____ 21,722
Number of Teachers _____ 1,421
Annual Budget _____ \$162.0 million

For more information

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Expect Great Things.

Three simple words – the slogan of Bridgeport Public Schools – have become symbolic of the academic turnaround in this small coastal Connecticut city.

An industrial town during World War II, Bridgeport lost much of its manufacturing base after the war, and along with it, a significant amount of school district revenue. Today, some 96 percent of Bridgeport students qualify for free and reduced price student lunch.

Yet amidst great economic challenges, Bridgeport Public Schools is reinvigorating the city.

Although Bridgeport serves the highest percentage of low-income students in Connecticut, Bridgeport students in 2005 outperformed in six out of six areas (elementary, middle and high school, reading and math) using The Broad Prize methodology. In addition, Bridgeport's low-income, African-American and Hispanic students also outperformed their peers in other Connecticut districts in six out of six

areas. Between 2002 and 2005, African-American students also showed greater improvement than their peers in other Connecticut districts in all six areas.

The change in philosophy and school district culture – to expect great things from students – is the cornerstone of the district's success, says Superintendent John J. Ramos, Sr., who grew up in Bridgeport and previously led Connecticut's state department of education efforts to turn around low-performing schools before returning to Bridgeport in April 2005.

"It is amazing to work with the students who walk the same neighborhoods that I did," says Ramos.

Consistency among teaching and learning

Immediately recognizing the need to further shift the district's focus away from social issues and toward learning and teaching, Ramos reorganized the district so that all staff report to curriculum and instruction leadership, rather than up through feeder pattern supervisors.

In addition, Ramos continued efforts to align curriculum with demanding Connecticut state standards – and in some cases with national standards – and likewise align professional development, assessments, portfolios and report cards. New pacing guides in elementary and middle schools now mean that when Bridgeport’s highly mobile student population moves between schools, the students are able to pick up right where they left off.

To ensure that teachers are following the curriculum and the pacing guides, central office staff and school leadership frequently conduct classroom walk-throughs. Teachers credit both the classroom walk-throughs and the opportunity to work with literacy and numeracy coaches in most schools with improving teaching and therefore, student achievement.

“My literacy coach is great,” says Mary MacDonald, a new second-grade teacher at Columbus Elementary School. “If I have a writing issue with one student, I bring a sample and she helps me on the best way to address it and help him. As they say, two heads think better than one.”

Data-driven instruction

In Bridgeport, student achievement data is in demand by Bridgeport teachers, and more and more of them rely on it to drive their instruction. For example, teachers are using data to tell whether certain teaching strategies, like lessons built on inference questions, are better for developing comprehension skills than more traditional approaches, such as completing fill-in-the-blank exercises.

At one Central High School ninth grade physical science class, students rub balloons together, creating electric fields. One student holds her balloon over a pile of paper clips, to see if the metal will cling to the surface, while her teacher asks the class what the properties of electric fields might be, based on their observations.

“I like this better than just listening in class,” says the student, as others nod their heads.

Different teaching approaches are being used more and more now that student achievement data, made accessible by the district, allows teachers to analyze whether their original teaching approaches worked, and if not, to brainstorm other approaches that might be more effective.

Each quarter, the district gives teachers access to online assessments for grades 3 through 7. In the past, results

from state tests weren’t received until the end of the year, allowing teachers only to adjust teaching for the next year’s class. But today, Bridgeport teachers can use the supplemental quarterly online results, which are available immediately from any computer in the district, to regularly shape their instruction.

“Online assessments have been fantastic – the results are almost instantaneous,” says Charles Framularo, Hall Elementary’s numeracy coach. “I was able to see how other schools did on the items we struggled with. We learned we were not alone, so we knew what we had to do and where to address it.”

Of course, data also shows what is working. And here in Bridgeport, as ethnic achievement gaps shrink and the district outperforms its peers, it is clear that this city is on the right track.



A low-angle photograph of the Statue of Liberty against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The statue is green and stands on a stone pedestal with a balcony where small figures of people can be seen. The text 'Jersey City Public Schools' is centered over the middle of the statue.

Jersey City Public Schools

Jersey City Public Schools

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size) _____ 151
Number of Schools _____ 47
Number of Students _____ 29,288
Number of Teachers _____ 3,264
Annual Budget _____ \$590.7 million

For more information

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Jersey City residents will tell you they live in “Little New York.”

Home to many first-generation immigrants, the city even claims legal ownership of the Statue of Liberty. But while it sits just a stone’s throw across the river from New York’s tallest buildings, when it comes to education, Jersey City has no plans to sit in the shadow of its neighbor.

In 2005, Jersey City Public Schools outperformed other New Jersey districts serving student populations with similar income levels in six out of six areas (elementary, middle and high school, reading and math), using The Broad Prize methodology.

In addition, the district narrowed ethnic achievement gaps in reading and math: between 2002 and 2005, the African-American achievement gap closed 15 percentage points in math at the elementary level and 8 percentage points in reading at the middle school level.

Similarly, the Hispanic achievement gap closed 14 percentage

points in math at the elementary school level and 7 percentage points in reading at the middle school level.

These achievements are particularly noteworthy, says Dr. Charles T. Epps, Jr., Jersey City’s six-year superintendent, in one of the country’s most diverse districts, where more than 109 languages are spoken. Abbott v. Burke, a 1990 state court ruling, awarded extra money to poorer districts, and Jersey City is among those that receive additional funds for each student. This has allowed the district to provide extra social services for its diverse student body, hire more teachers, reduce class size and – to make learning more relevant to students – bolster professional development, instructional programs, and state-of-the-art technology.

Real-world learning

It’s not your ordinary math or science lesson.

On a spring morning, Dickinson High School students are building boats that can run without using electrical parts. They excitedly discuss math equations and physics principles

that might allow the boats to sink or swim. But they remain sublimely oblivious to the main force that's in motion. They are learning.

Jersey City hasn't quite thrown out the textbook when it comes to learning, but under Epps' leadership, teachers in every school are using problem-based learning to engage more students in the curriculum.

"Textbooks are leaving. I never thought I would see that in my lifetime," says Ismael Aponte, eight-year principal of Webb Elementary

Every morning in every Jersey City school, teachers can be found collaborating across subjects – even across grades – to develop real-world projects like "stock market fairs," which engage students in learning about economics through creating their own stock companies and "selling" stocks to teachers.

Teachers report that inquiry-based learning has allowed more students to feel successful at academics, resulting in better grades and attendance. And district officials note that the level of conversation children have in small groups as they work on projects is so much richer than when students simply sat with a textbook and answered teacher-directed questions.

"When learning is around a theme, it's fun for them," says Dr. Joseph Ramos, district director of bilingual programs. "They love to create and build and make things and show their work."

Reading can be fun

Even though textbooks aren't front and center in Jersey City instruction, reading is.

Epps believes that if students learn to love to read, they will read more and will become better readers. By adopting the "100 Book Challenge," the district has created a culture of hype and hope around reading that begins with a challenge – every student must read 100 books each marking period.

To the delight of students, color-coded baskets arrive each week in their classroom, containing enough books so that every student can find books at the appropriate level. Students are then rewarded with prizes for reading independently during school and at home for 30 minutes every night, with a parent's sign-off.

And elementary reading scores are going up. Between 2002 and 2005, Jersey City's African-American achievement gap closed 10 percentage points in reading, and the Hispanic achievement gap closed 10 percentage points.

Teachers, who monitor reading performance levels, gush over the progress students have made, crediting the on-level books, the competition and the rewards for increasing reading volume, reading levels and parental involvement.

"It is like Christmas when they get new books," says one teacher at Christa McAuliffe K-8. "It builds excitement about reading – I overhear them saying to each other, 'Can I have that book after you?'"

It is this excitement to learn, says Epps, that is at the heart of his district's success. "We try to make every child feel that there is something at the end of the rainbow for him or her."



An aerial photograph of Miami, Florida, showing a wide canal with a bridge crossing it. The city skyline is visible in the background, with numerous high-rise buildings. The sky is filled with large, white clouds. The text "Miami-Dade County Public Schools" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size) _____ 4
Number of Schools _____ 433
Number of Students _____ 362,033
Number of Teachers _____ 21,464
Annual Budget _____ \$2.3 billion

For more information

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If there's any question about how critical a strong superintendent is to the success of an urban school district, look no farther than Miami-Dade County Public Schools. "Rudy Crew is the best news this community has seen in a long time," says David Lawrence, Jr., retired publisher of The Miami Herald, and now president of The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation.

In just two years, say educators and non-educators alike, Dr. Rudy Crew, former New York City schools chancellor, has had a profound impact on the country's fourth-largest district.

Through public speeches, town hall meetings and regular recorded phone calls to every parent in the district, Crew has asked a community long plagued with achievement gaps to change its paradigm – away from talk, he says, and instead toward finding and funding answers. Those answers include efforts like advanced classes to raise student expectations and a comprehensive literacy focus in low-performing schools. "Orthodoxy has been challenged, the goal of education has been forthrightly changed and community dialogue

has begun around this notion of what you're supposed to learn in school and what it's supposed to prepare you for," says George Knox, a former Miami City attorney and one of Miami's most respected business and community leaders.

"If you are going to be a leader," said Crew, in his first meeting with principals and other administrators in August 2004, "I am not asking you to lead what is...I am asking you to lead what has not even happened yet."

Crew has accelerated the district's success. Between 2002 and 2005, Miami-Dade County Public Schools showed greater improvement than other Florida districts serving similar income levels in six out of six areas (elementary, middle and high school, reading and math), using The Broad Prize methodology. In addition, Miami-Dade's low-income students showed greater improvement in all six areas. And in 2005, the district's African-American and Hispanic students outperformed their peers in similar districts in at least five out of six areas.

Higher expectations lower achievement gaps

If you set high expectations, students will rise to meet them.

In 2005, Crew's administration began a major effort to bump up the number of advanced courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge Academy classes offered in the district, believing that when schools raise the bar, students will come to expect more of themselves, and persistent achievement gaps will decrease.

And in one eleventh grade IB English class at Ferguson High School, the students are the proof.

"I have come so far this year," says one student, sitting in a circle of her classmates as she reads a self-evaluation of her progress over the year. "And I am so proud of myself." Across the circle, her teacher beams with shared pride.

The district funded at least ten AP courses in every high school, in addition to IB and Cambridge programs in some schools. Middle and high schools started offering necessary AP prerequisites in lower grades, so students can now, for example, take biology in the ninth grade.

"Identifying the giftedness in every student goes a long way to closing the achievement gap," says Crew. "Offering gifted units challenges more kids to learn to higher expectations."

Since 2002, the district has seen a 59 percent increase in the number of Advanced Placement exams taken by African-American and Hispanic students. And teachers note that offering AP, IB and gifted classes establishes an attitude that raises the quality of the whole school.

"Students not in AP are seeing others take AP classes, and they start to change their attitude," says Bill Cobb, a 47-year veteran teacher, whose low-performing school recently began offering AP classes. "They think, 'Why am I not there, and what do I need to do to get there?'"

Tackling low-performing schools

To turn around chronically low-performing schools, the district in 2004 reorganized them into a "School Improvement Zone." Zone schools receive additional support staff and common literacy materials, have a longer school day and year, after-school programs, mandated professional development and offer higher teacher pay.

"I put every card I had in the low-performing schools basket," says Crew.

In a little over a year, students in Zone schools have shown significant gains. Just over a third of Zone third graders were reading at grade level on state tests when the Zone began. Today, more than half read at grade level.

Principals report that the Zone also has opened up much-needed collaboration between low-performing schools.

"It is rewarding as a leader to feel comfortable picking up a phone and talking to my Zone colleagues about issues going on in our schools," says Cheryl Nelson, principal at Norland Middle School. "No longer are we on an island doing our own thing."

Far from being alone on an island, this Broad Prize finalist clearly now sits in the national spotlight.



An aerial photograph of New York City, showing a dense urban landscape. The Empire State Building is the most prominent skyscraper in the center. Other notable buildings include the Chrysler Building to the right and various mid-rise structures throughout the city. The foreground shows a mix of older brick buildings and modern high-rises. The sky is clear and blue.

New York City Department of Education

New York City Department of Education

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size) _____ 1
Number of Schools _____ 1,456
Number of Students _____ 1,055,986
Number of Teachers _____ 76,167
Annual Budget _____ \$14.8 billion

For more information

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As a loud train rumbles past the Florence Nightingale School in downtown Manhattan, first-grade students stretch their hands high into the air, apparently unfazed by the ruckus outside.

Teacher Ellen Gentilviso raises her voice to be heard. “We want to read as fast as we talk,” she booms to a sea of young, eager faces of all colors. In a city where talking fast is a way of life, reading fast has become one too.

Since 2002, student achievement has been on the rise in New York City, particularly by African-American and Hispanic students, making the New York City Department of Education a Broad Prize finalist for the second year in a row. Specifically, between 2002 and 2005, the achievement gap between African-American students and their white counterparts closed seven percentage points in elementary reading, and the Hispanic achievement gap closed nine percentage points in elementary reading.

In 2005, New York City outperformed other New York districts serving similar income levels in five of six areas

(elementary, middle and high school, reading and math), using The Broad Prize methodology. In addition, New York City’s African-American and low-income students outperformed their peers in similar districts in the state in elementary and middle school reading and math.

New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, a former assistant U.S. attorney general, leads the system of more than 1 million students – twice as many as all other 2006 Broad Prize finalists combined. Many within the district credit Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who appointed Klein in 2002, for providing the city with the consistent leadership needed for reform to take root.

“If not for mayoral control,” Klein says, “we could not have done the good work we have here.”

Under Klein’s direction, New York City schools have put a rigorous, standards-based math and reading curriculum in place across schools and have bolstered professional development, support from coaches and robust intervention strategies and assessments. Jumps in math scores followed

across all grade levels.

“Now we identify students early and provide them with individual and differentiated academic interventions,” Klein says.

Students also reap the fruits of the Chancellor’s decision three years ago to adopt a balanced literacy program, where whole-group lessons are followed by independent reading at each student’s individual level.

“Now classroom libraries are leveled,” says Daria Rigney, a local instructional superintendent. “Children are becoming better writers, thinkers and more independent learners. Never have I seen children so excited about learning.”

Principals empowered

By their own admission, New York City principals previously spent too much time on compliance-based functions like gathering suspension data. Now the department trains principals to be instructional leaders, to interpret data and to work with teachers on a menu of student interventions that continuously improve instruction.

“When I started, the principal would just walk around,” says one middle school teacher. “In the last two years, she has gotten more personally involved in what is occurring in the classroom.”

Principals can now obtain greater authority over spending and governing, in exchange for demonstrating performance. Schools that agree to take on such responsibility can apply to become part of what is called the “Empowerment Zone.” After the Zone was successfully piloted, a flood of applications to join the Zone poured into the department from principals across the city.

And a new agreement with the teachers’ union ended the long-standing practice of simply transferring teachers with poor track records to other schools. Now principals can refuse such transfers, choosing only highly qualified teachers that fit the needs of the school.

To ensure talented principals are in place across the city, the department runs its own rigorous, standards-based principal recruitment and training program, the New York Leadership Academy.

In the last two years, the program has placed more than 110 new principals, most in high-need schools, and provided them with mentors and peer supports.

“The Leadership Academy model is fabulous,” says one principal attendee. “It’s incredibly rich problem-solving for hypothetical schools and intense work with a mentor principal during your first year.”

Teachers empowered


In many ways, New York City teachers now resemble scientists. They analyze student achievement data together in “labs,” hypothesizing over which teaching strategies to use in the classroom.

“There has been a tremendous shift in the style of teaching in my six years here,” says Irene Quvus, principal of P.S. 110. “There is no more private practice – teachers have to see what is going on in other classrooms and learn from one another.”

In Quvus’ school, teachers use team-teaching models, workshops and visits to other schools to regularly collaborate with each other, with mentors and with literacy and math coaches. Some 200 New York City schools are considered “model schools” for being particularly strong in certain areas, such as special education, art, English language learner programs or collaborative team teaching, and they are regularly visited by teachers from other schools.

“Visiting other schools, and processing the visits has been instrumental,” says Rigney. “What did you see? How can you do it? What do you need? Gone are the days of, ‘Take your reader out and turn to page 12.’ Now, kids are so excited to learn.”





The lessons of the past are most valuable if used to shape the future.

As we celebrate the fifth year of The Broad Prize, we look back at the first four Broad Prize winners and how they have performed since winning the nation's top education award for urban school districts.

Successes, challenges, struggles. Every urban school district has them, and the stories in each of these districts continue to unfold.

2002

Houston Independent School District

2003

Long Beach Unified School District

2004

Garden Grove Unified School District

2005

Norfolk Public Schools



2002 Winner

Houston Independent School District

When Claudia Betancourt answered the door one Saturday in August 2004, she was stunned to see Houston Independent School District Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra and 20 members of the community standing at her doorstep.

Betancourt was a 21-year-old mother of two who had dropped out of school. Saavedra and his band of volunteers had come to convince Betancourt to return and finish high school.

There was the issue of who would watch her children. A teacher helped line up childcare during school hours. She needed to work so she could support her family. Another teacher helped get her an after-school job at a local supermarket.

One by one, the excuses had solutions, and Betancourt was back in school.

That first year Saavedra organized “Reach Out to Dropouts,” some 800 volunteers showed up to make home visits to students who had left school. And as a result of the community outreach, 102 students came back to school.

Houston was the inaugural Broad Prize winner in 2002, and the following year, with an increasing number of students leaving school without graduating, the district was plagued with a state investigation into how dropouts were reported.

In response, during his first month as interim superintendent, Saavedra launched the dropout prevention program, which, along with efforts to develop a strong data system and a higher level, thinking-based curriculum, has become a noteworthy part of district efforts to improve student achievement.

The dropout prevention program quickly engaged the community, attracting the mayor, state representatives and school board members to the cause.

“We as an institution bear a large part of the responsibility,” Saavedra says. “It’s not that they elected to drop out. It’s because they became disengaged. It’s not the kids’ fault. It’s our fault. It’s our responsibility to get them back in.”

The concept is simple, yet the payoff is extraordinary. Middle and high school principals review lists of students enrolled for the fall and compare them with the enrollment lists from the previous spring. They then identify the students who dropped off the list, and a week before the start of school, a group of volunteers staff a phone bank and call each student

to confirm his or her address. Two weeks after the start of school, teams of volunteers fan out across the city on a Saturday to make home visits.

“We said, ‘Here’s your preacher, your teacher and your future employer,’” says Roberta Cusack, who oversees the district’s dropout prevention program as director of student engagement. “Some kids said, ‘OK, I’ll come back.’ They didn’t know it was OK to go back.”

Saavedra realized that one home visit wouldn’t be enough to keep a student in school. So he used Title I funds to hire a team of 19 dropout prevention specialists. Each student who comes back to school is assigned a specialist who monitors the teen throughout the year.

“Their job is to knock on doors and to counsel kids to get back to school,” Saavedra says. “They case manage and keep up with these kids. We ensure there’s an adult on the school campus who connects to that kid.”

“My people will visit some of these homes 10 to 15 times, telling them what kinds of jobs they can get with a diploma,” Cusack says.

The commitment to attendance in Houston starts as early as elementary school. At Lyons Elementary School, teachers across each grade share a grade-level phone. Once teachers take attendance, they identify the missing students, and before 9 a.m., they’ve placed calls to the children’s homes.

“Little children don’t miss class,” says fifth-grade teacher Anne Marek. “Parents don’t get them here.”

Sometimes a call is all it takes to jumpstart the morning trip to school. Other times, Principal Connie Berger drives to the student’s house. “It only takes one visit from Mrs. Berger,” says fourth-grade teacher Beverly Gatlin. Adds Berger, “Once they see you standing in their living room...”

In the second year of the dropout prevention program, more than 1,500 volunteers turned out to make home visits, and 291 students came back to school. And in May 2005, Claudia Betancourt was one of the seniors to don a cap and gown and receive her high school diploma.

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Charles Belvin knows how to talk sixth grade.

He stands in front of a white board and writes a math equation: $3t - 17 = 4$.

Then he starts to speak to the kids in a language they can understand.

“Now Tanya over here,” he says, starting to jive as he refers to the “t” in the equation, “she doesn’t want to be left out of the party, which is happening over here.” Belvin demonstrates a little dance move as he points to the right side of the equation. “That’s where the action is, so she needs to move over to this side.”

Every pair of eyes in the room is focused on Belvin. The students giggle when he names the variable. And as Belvin works the math problem, hands shoot in the air when he asks who knows the answer.

Since winning The Broad Prize in 2003, Long Beach Unified School District has implemented a strong focus on math in all schools. Many schools have shown significant gains in math, especially at the elementary level. At Edison Elementary School, for instance, 75 percent of fifth graders recently attained proficiency in math, a stark increase from 22 percent the previous year. The district is now working to replicate such successes at more of its schools.

The district has pushed pre-algebra to the sixth grade, and all of the district’s middle schools are using technology in math classes. Wireless calculators give teachers instant feedback as students work through equations, helping direct instruction to the students who need assistance.

The 2003 Broad Prize win infused the district with the confidence and recognition it needed to continue focusing on student achievement, despite a bleak financial picture. Since 2003, “the socioeconomic gap – or the gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ – has gotten wider,” says Superintendent Chris Steinhauser.

As the nation’s sixth poorest city, Long Beach has more than a third of its residents on welfare. And budget cuts have dramatically reduced resources in the city’s schools. The district lost \$45 million in state revenue, and lower overall enrollment due in part to the unaffordable housing market cut another \$11 million from district coffers.

Despite these urban challenges, Long Beach teachers and administrators have pulled together in a cohesive

district-wide team with a singular focus that puts students at the forefront.

“There is a built-in compass inside everyone in the district,” says Karen DeVries, deputy superintendent. “Kids come first. There are no excuses. We do whatever it takes.”

And when it comes to math and language arts proficiency, the district has implemented a policy of tough love. All students who are below grade level are required to attend summer school or an extra class after school.

Parent buy-in is essential for the success of the retention program. “The forms that we send home have two boxes they can check,” says Peggy Gutierrez, a math coach at Lindbergh Middle School. “The first says, ‘Yes, I want my child to succeed.’ And the second says, ‘No, I don’t care if my child succeeds.’ We always get the forms back with a yes.”

Since 2003, the district has implemented common pacing guides in all schools, added quarterly benchmark assessments in grades 6-12 and posted course outlines on the web so even other districts across the country can benefit from Long Beach’s curriculum. The district website has also been an important way to get parents involved in their children’s education.

To engage families in helping their children with math homework, the district offers online “beat the computer” math drills. Over the past two years, the number of annual web hits has increased from 1,200 to 22,000.

School leaders report that more parents and students are aware of educational goals and benchmarks and what they can each do to ensure success.

“You see that progress with them,” says Tory Baker, a fourth-grade teacher at Edison Elementary School. “You see that light bulb going on and you realize ‘Wow, you’re learning.’”

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2003 Winner

Long Beach Unified School District



A sepia-toned photograph of a schoolyard. In the foreground, a basketball hoop and backboard are visible on the right side. Three young boys are standing on a paved path in the lower-left corner, smiling at the camera. The boy on the right is holding a basketball. In the background, a grassy field is filled with other children playing, and there are trees and a building in the distance under a cloudy sky.

2004 Winner

Garden Grove Unified School District

In Staci Feazel's third-grade class at Skylark Elementary School, eight-year-olds are reviewing printouts showing their individual detailed results from a recent district-wide quarterly benchmark assessment, broken down by each of the district's academic standards.

What sounds like a tedious exercise turns into a lesson in what, how and why students are learning. The class determines that green represents success, so students swipe a green highlighter over every score that is "proficient" or "advanced." They then move on to scores that are "basic," and recognizing that they are warning areas, the students highlight those in yellow. Sections that scored "below basic" and "far below basic" are marked in pink.

For 2004 Broad Prize winner Garden Grove Unified School District, the magic of using data to drive student achievement is crystal clear.

"They were immediately counting how many they got in each section so they knew what they needed to do better," Feazel says. "The difference in scores between the first test and the second test was like night and day, and now they ask me, 'When are we going to have the next one so we can prove we can do it?'"

When Garden Grove won the 2004 Broad Prize, its use of data was noteworthy, but since then, the district has intensified its focus on using assessment information to shape its curriculum, modify lesson plans and ensure that teaching and learning are in sync. In the past, the district focused on data analysis with administrators, principals and teachers. But now the students are part of the equation.

Since 2004, Garden Grove has maintained high levels of student performance while continuing to close the gap between high- and low-income students faster than other California school districts on average.

In 2004, Garden Grove administered benchmark assessments in math. Since then, the district has added quarterly benchmarks in science, English and history. Based on the district's detailed "focus standards," the benchmarks are also graded consistently, so "basic" or "proficient" has the same meaning across the district.

Before the district used data, "we had an 'autopsy' at the end of the year but never had diagnostic tests," says superintendent Laura Schwalm. "Now benchmarks are our diagnostic tests."

Scantrons were a big selling point for the teachers because the electronic test sheets meant not only easy and convenient grading, but also instant results.

As a result of frequent data analysis and real-time adjustments in teaching, students stay on track and there are no surprises at the end of the year.

"As teachers, we don't spend as much time teaching the same lesson over and over again," says Lake Intermediate social studies teacher Claire Egger. "By the fourth quarter, we're on the freeway. We're not on a dirt road."

First-grade teacher Stacy Gilbert wanted to apply Feazel's success getting students excited about demonstrating their proficiency in her own classroom. So she did a similar exercise, reviewing the test results and highlighting areas where individual students and the class as a whole didn't meet the standards.

"I was shocked at the ownership they took," Gilbert says. "Even in first grade, they can do it, and they know how they are doing in class. They can tell you what they got on their last writing genre, what they got on their last theme skills test, and on their math test. They know exactly where they are and where they need to go."

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Realtors use it as a selling point.

It helped convince the Norfolk City Council to approve the school district's budget in full.

And it prompted a citywide celebration in a Navy town that is still continuing one year later.

Norfolk Public Schools, a finalist in 2003 and 2004 and the winner of the 2005 Broad Prize, turned the high-profile national education honor into a citywide victory.

"Teachers, principals, district staff, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, parents and students now talk about our schools with great pride," says Dr. Stephen Jones, Norfolk's superintendent. "Too often, school staff are unsung heroes, and their good work goes unacknowledged. But because we are a Broad Prize winner, people now believe that success is doable. If you show you can make a difference in any urban area, you are looked upon as a great asset to the city and not a liability."

From black tie affairs to receptions across the city, the Broad Prize honor infused community, business and city support for the schools with adrenaline. In addition, district officials claim the award has helped the district overcome perception problems faced by urban schools and energized teachers and administrators to continue building on their success.

Jones, who became superintendent the month the district won The Broad Prize, says it raised the stakes for his work leading the district.

"We were on a ten-year journey towards world-class status, and were midway between that benchmark when we won," he says. "The baton passed to me, and now on my watch, I am taking us through the rest of the journey. I've got to run with it."

Noted for its "All Means All" philosophy, which set state standards as the minimum goal for every student and created a focus on "powerful literacy," Norfolk not only sustained its progress but also surpassed it in the last year. In virtually all state test subjects and grades, the district exceeded state benchmarks. And the achievement gap between African-American students, who comprise more than two-thirds of the student population, and white students has decreased in 20 out of 23 state tests over the last five years.

During the 2005 to 2006 school year, the district

developed a five-year strategic plan to make Norfolk a "world-class district" in which students graduate with the knowledge and skills to be able to work in a variety of jobs over the course of their lives.

The plan's goals include expanding early childhood education, dramatically increasing the number of students who take Advanced Placement courses, expanding college and university partnerships, and improving special, alternative and gifted and talented education. The district intends to align curriculum with top international standards and benchmarks and make foreign language instruction available for all elementary school students.

"There's no more low-hanging fruit to pick," says Jones. "Now we have to make sure there are multiple pathways of excellence for every child to succeed."

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2005 Winner

Norfolk Public Schools



Broad Prize Selection Jury

The 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 for Urban Education.

Henry Cisneros, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, CityView America
John Engler, Former Governor of Michigan
Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., Chairman, The Carlyle Group
James Hunt, Jr., Former Governor of North Carolina
Roderick Paige, Former U.S. Secretary of Education
Hugh Price, Former President and CEO, National Urban League
Richard Riley, Former U.S. Secretary of Education
Andrew Stern, International President, Service Employees International Union

Broad Prize Review Board

A distinguished group of the country's top educational leaders serves as the Review Board for The Broad Prize for Urban Education. The Review Board members examine performance indicators, demographic statistics and other information about the urban school districts that are eligible for the Prize. Based on their examination, the Review Board narrows the list of 100 eligible school districts to the five finalists for the Prize.

Russlynn Ali, Executive Director, The Education Trust West
Anne L. Bryant, Executive Director, National School Boards Association
Christopher Cross, Chairman, Cross & Jofus, LLC
Jo Lynne DeMary, Former Virginia State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Charles Desmond, Executive Vice President, Tröfner Foundation
Dan Goldhaber, Research Associate Professor, University of Washington
Frederick Hess, Director of Education Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute
Paul T. Hill, Director, Center for Reinventing Public Education
David Hornbeck, Former President, Children's Defense Fund
Phyllis Hunter, Education Consultant
Wendy Kopp, Founder and President, Teach For America
Alexander Kress, Partner, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Wendy Puriefoy, President, Public Education Network
Piedad Robertson, President, Education Commission of the States
Andrew Rotherham, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Education Sector
Anthony Trujillo, Senior Associate, National Center on Education and the Economy

The National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) manages The Broad Prize for Urban Education through a rigorous and comprehensive process that collects a wealth of data on educational progress and engages the talents and expertise of researchers and leaders in education, business and public service.

The district profile data included in this brochure was collected from state or district websites for the 2005/2006 school year.

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