



Education Equality in America

Comparing the Achievement Gap
Across Schools and Cities

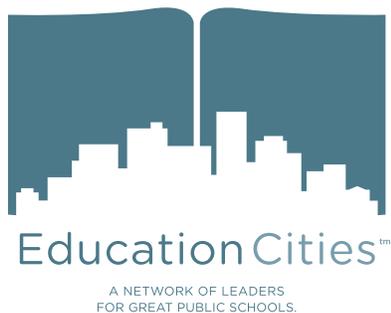


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Who We Are



ABOUT EDUCATION CITIES

Education Cities is a network of 31 city-based organizations in 24 cities united by one North Star goal: increasing the number of great public schools. Learn more at education-cities.org.

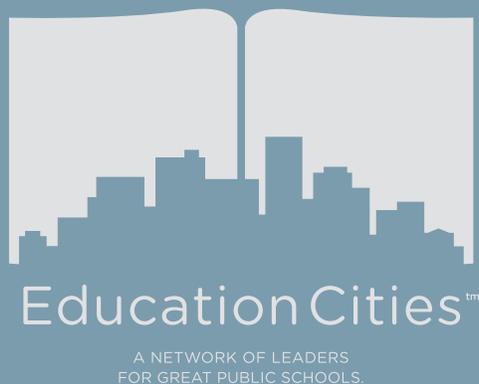
MARCH 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We are also grateful to the many thought partners, academics, and data experts who contributed to the design, review, and production of the Education Equality Index. Finally, we would like to thank George Prevelige, Joe Siedlecki, and Jon Rybka from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation for supporting this work and advising our team along the way.

Carrie McPherson Douglass, Dan Tesfay, and Christine Schneider from Education Cities have all played leading roles developing and producing the Education Equality Index. The findings and conclusions in this report, in addition to any errors, are our own.



The United States was founded on the idea that we are all created equal, yet economic, racial, and educational inequality have become key themes in our civic discourse. If education was once thought to be “the great equalizer,” how does the U.S. fare in our effort to provide equal opportunity to all children?

Education Cities and GreatSchools have together launched the Education Equality Index in an attempt to answer this question. The Education Equality Index is the first national comparative measure of the achievement gap between children growing up in low-income communities and their peers. Our data spans 42 states, 15,000 cities, 78,000 schools, and 43,000,000 children. It is the largest data set of its kind.

We have developed a methodology to help us compare schools and cities across the country, despite the use of different standards and different tests. What we have found in our first wave of research is reason for frustration, hope, and determination.

We should be frustrated that the achievement gap is pervasive and growing in nearly half of the largest 100 U.S. cities. We should be hopeful because in nearly every city, there are schools where students from low-income families are achieving at or above the same level as their peers across the state. And we should be determined to learn from these schools, and commit to ensuring more children can access gap-closing schools each and every year.

This is the first of a variety of publications coming in 2016 and beyond tied to the Education Equality Index data. We hope that parents, educators, policymakers, and civic leaders will explore this report to see how their communities fare in our ranking of the 100 largest cities in the country. More importantly, we encourage everyone to celebrate schools with small or no achievement gap. There are not enough of these schools. But their existence should remind us that it is indeed possible to live up to our national ideals.

Yours in service,



Ethan Gray

Founder and CEO, Education Cities

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IS AN AMERICAN IDEAL.

Yet only **2 of 10 students** from low-income families attend schools that have successfully closed the achievement gap.





About the Education Equality Index

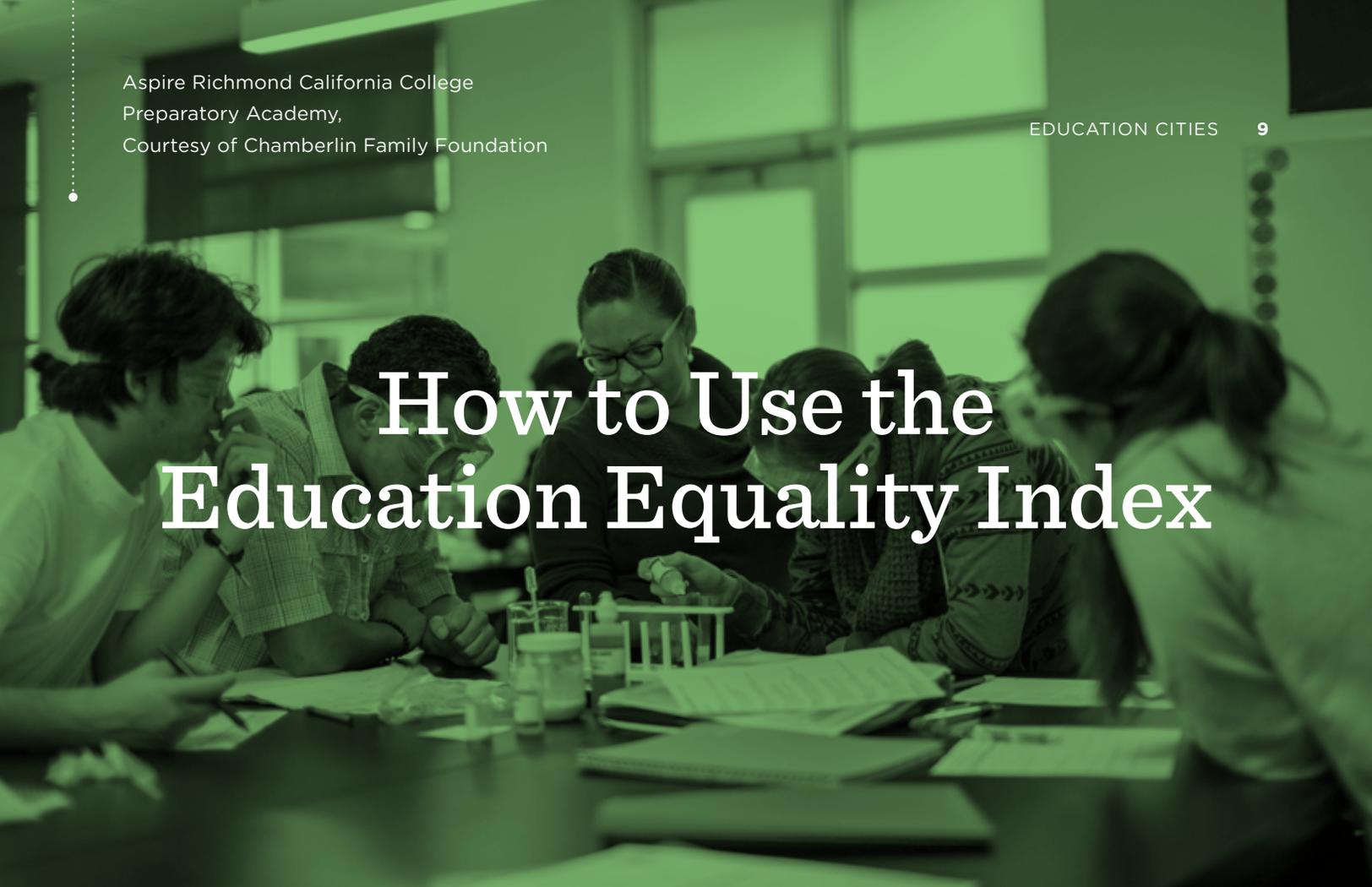
The Education Equality Index is the first national comparative measure of the achievement gap between students from low-income families and their peers across the state, measured at the school and city levels.

Through the Education Equality Index, Education Cities has amassed one of the largest collections of income-focused proficiency data at the school and grade levels. We have also developed a nationally-unique methodology that allows us to compare student performance across cities even though they use different assessments and have set different achievement standards.

In the first report using Education Equality Index data, we focus on schools with significant concentrations of students from low-income families. The data identifies schools with small or nonexistent achievement gaps where at least 51 percent of the student population receives free or reduced price lunch (a common measure of economic disadvantage). We have chosen to focus on these schools because 51 percent is the national average of students from low-income families¹. To be clear, there are many schools that serve fewer than 51 percent students who receive free or reduced price lunch with small or nonexistent achievement gaps. However, we believe that it is important to highlight schools with significant concentrations of students from low-income families as their efforts and achievements are worthy of special attention. We made a decision to highlight up to 10 schools in each city. In some cities there are fewer and in some cities there are more – but for the focus of this first release we'd like to draw attention to the top 10. In future reports, we plan to release additional data and analysis of schools that serve the full spectrum of student populations.

We also wish to clarify that the Education Equality Index is not intended to serve as a broad measure of school quality; rather, it's a narrow measure of equality of student outcomes. For too long, discussions about school quality have failed to account for the persistent achievement gap between children from low-income families and their peers. Education Cities believes that any conversation about school quality must include a focus on equality as well. Too many state accountability systems give credit to supposedly high-performing schools, even if those schools maintain significant achievement gaps between children from different backgrounds. The Education Equality Index makes it easy for parents, educators, and policymakers to bring equality into any discussion of school quality at the city or state level.

¹ National Center For Education Statistics, "Number and percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, by state," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.10.asp



How to Use the Education Equality Index

The Education Equality Index identifies schools and cities where students from low-income families are achieving at or above the same level as their peers across the state.

We hope this tool serves as a starting place for educators, policymakers, researchers, and school leaders as they look to scale what works for all children to more schools across the nation.

This is the first in a series of data releases designed to serve a wide variety of audiences.

National Education Leaders

No school should be considered high-quality if it does not serve its most vulnerable population well.

The Education Equality Index should root conversations about school quality in one simple question: Do they serve all students, regardless of demographics, well? In the education sector, national policymakers, nonprofit leaders, and researchers should identify and study the places that have made the most progress in closing the achievement gap, and identify the enabling conditions that allow students from low-income families to achieve at levels similar to their peers.

It's our hope that national education leaders use the Education Equality Index to provide direction when answering the following questions:

- 1 Which cities are closing the achievement gap fastest?**
- 2 How might measures of equality get built into national and state accountability systems?**
- 3 What correlations should we run with Education Equality Index data to identify additional research questions?**

State Education Leaders

While many states and cities have robust school quality measures that incorporate meaningful indicators such as college readiness, culture, and safety, few, if any, are able to determine with this level of clarity how well specific schools are serving their most vulnerable children.

We challenge those leading the charge at the state level to develop new accountability systems in the wake of the Every Child Succeeds Act to incorporate a measure of equality, so that closing the achievement gap becomes a priority in states across the country.

State education leaders should use the Education Equality Index to provide direction when answering the following questions:

- 1** What cities in my state are closing the achievement gap fastest? What are they doing that is materially different than cities where the gap is largest, or growing the fastest?
- 2** How well, if at all, does our current accountability system account for equality of outcomes between children from low-income families and their peers?
- 3** How can state leaders learn from educators working in the most equitable schools, to support policies that foster more schools like theirs?

Mayors

Cities are the hotbed of innovation for public education, and mayors can yield enormous impact.

Mayors should use the Education Equality Index to provide direction when answering the following questions:

- 1 At what schools in my city are students from low-income families achieving at or above the same level as their peers across the state?
- 2 What cities across the country have the smallest achievement gaps, and what are they doing to ensure all children, regardless of demographics, have access to a great school?
- 3 What can our city do to ensure more schools provide an equitable education for all children?
- 4 How can our city overcome the “belief gap” that all students can succeed at high levels if given the opportunity?

School Systems

The Education Equality Index shows schools in every city that prove all children, regardless of background, can achieve at high levels.

School system leadership and staff should use the Education Equality Index to provide direction when answering the following questions:

- 1** What is happening in the schools in my city where students from low-income families are achieving at or above the same level as their peers across the state?
- 2** What are the conditions that yield the greatest impact on student outcomes in these schools? How can we create those conditions in more schools?
- 3** How can more educators be exposed to schools that are closing the achievement gap in order to learn from them?

Key Findings

City Level

In most major U.S. cities, **the achievement gap between students from low-income families and their peers stagnated or grew** between 2011-14.

Nearly every major U.S. city is home to a **large or massive achievement gap.**

Some of the biggest U.S. cities like El Paso, New York and San Francisco are among the 10 cities with the **smallest achievement gaps**.

Of the 100 major U.S. cities, **eight** have **small** achievement gaps, **25** have **large** achievement gaps and **67** have **massive** achievement gaps.

Some cities with **high concentrations of free and reduced lunch students** are those that are **most equitable**.

Two of the three major U.S. cities with the **smallest achievement gaps** - Hialeah and Miami - are both in the **same school district** - Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

School Level

Only two in 10 students from low-income families attend schools that have **successfully closed the achievement gap.**

The majority of major U.S. cities are home to **fewer than 10 schools** serving primarily students from low-income families that have a small or nonexistent achievement gap.

Schools with **massive achievement gaps in one year** are highly likely to have a **massive achievement gap the next year.**

Half of the schools recognized in the 100 biggest U.S. cities as having a **nonexistent or small achievement gap** are **elementary schools.**

On average, only **six percent of students from low-income families** in the biggest 100 cities in the U.S. attend a school with **no achievement gap.**

Rankings

Top 10 Cities (2014)

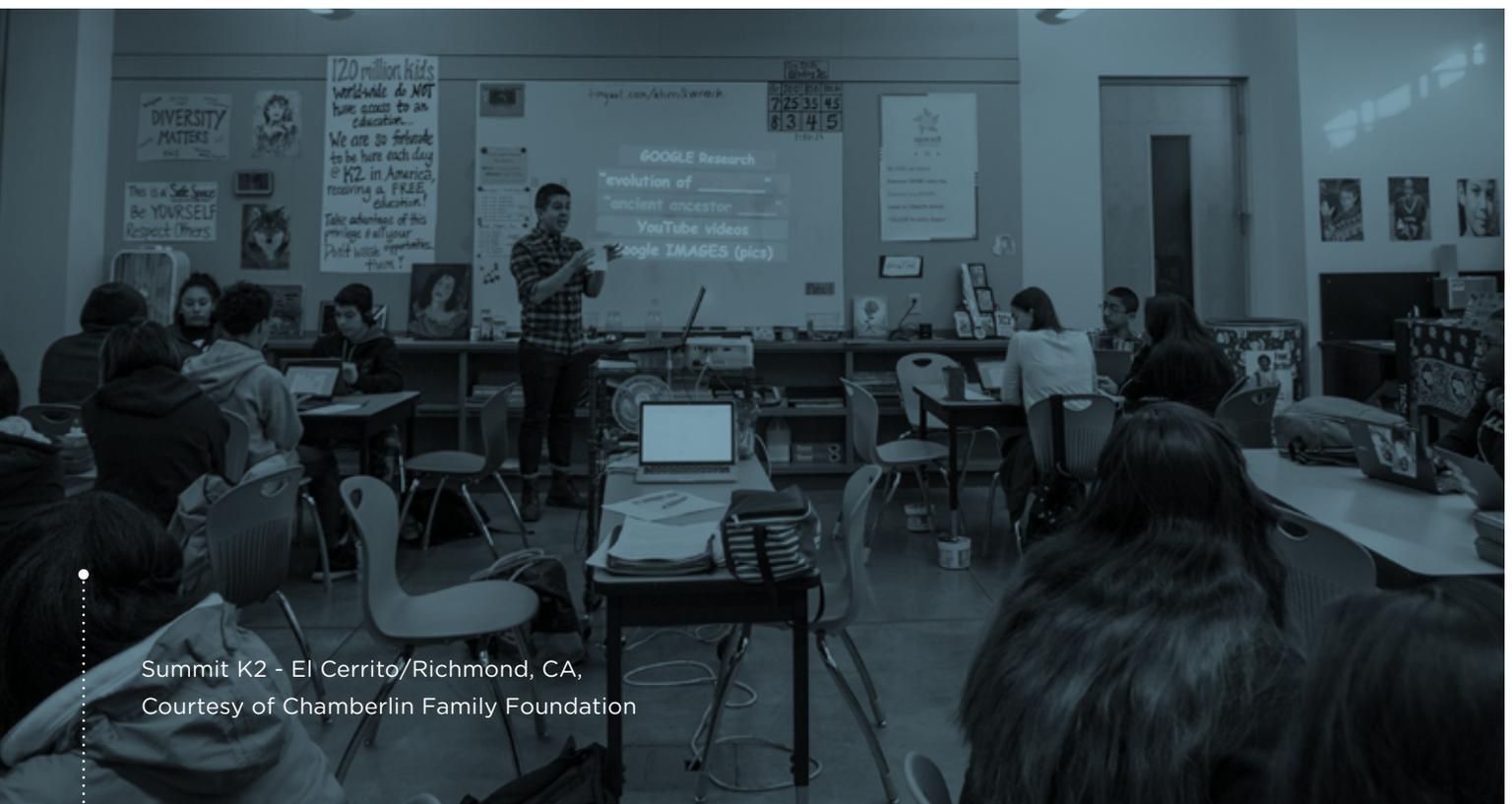
EI SCORE RANKING	CITY, STATE	EI SCORE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH ²
1	Hialeah, Fla.	60.9	83%
2	Gilbert, Ariz.	59.6	18%
3	Miami	57.7	73%
4	El Paso, Texas	56.2	74%
5	Irvine, Texas	55.3	14%
6	San Francisco*	51.1	63%
7	Scottsdale, Ariz.	50.8	20%
8	Garland, Texas	50.5	67%
9	New York	49.6	70%
10	Chandler, Ariz.	48.5	33%

² This indicates the estimated percentage of students in the city who receive free or reduced price lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Estimates were calculated using total school enrollment and percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch in each city using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Top 10 Cities (By Pace of Change 2011-2014)

PACE OF CHANGE RANKING	CITY, STATE	RATE OF CHANGE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
1	Omaha, Neb.	31%	50%
2	Denver	31%	71%
3	Norfolk, Va.	30%	63%
4	Reno, Nev.	25%	44%
5	North Las Vegas, Nev.	25%	74%
6	Lincoln, Neb.	23%	43%
7	Orlando, Fla.	21%	65%
8	Memphis, Tenn.	19%	82%
9	Tampa, Fla.	18%	64%
10	Tacoma, Wash.	18%	44%

* This score was calculated using 2013 data. California Department of Education did not record 2014 test results during transition to Smarter Balanced Assessment System.



Summit K2 - El Cerrito/Richmond, CA,
Courtesy of Chamberlin Family Foundation

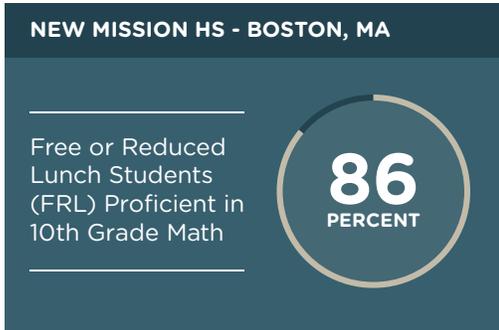


Methodology

The Education Equality Index (EEI) is a comparative measure of the achievement gap between students from low-income families, as measured by participation in the free and reduced price lunch program, and their peers. The EEI compares the proportion of students from low-income families who are proficient on a state assessment to all students across the state who took that same grade or subject level assessment.

This proportion-based methodology allows for comparisons between states, even though they use different assessments and set different standards for achievement.

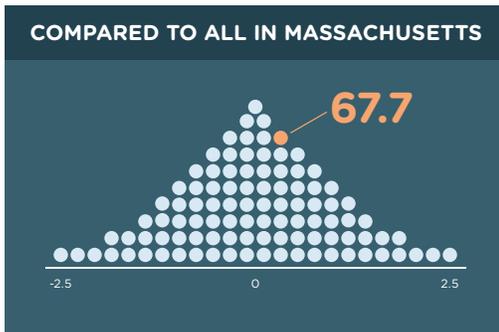
Using New Mission High School as an example, here is how an EEI score for an individual school is calculated.



Step 1:

Look at the percent of FRL students at one school who are “proficient” on a specific assessment.

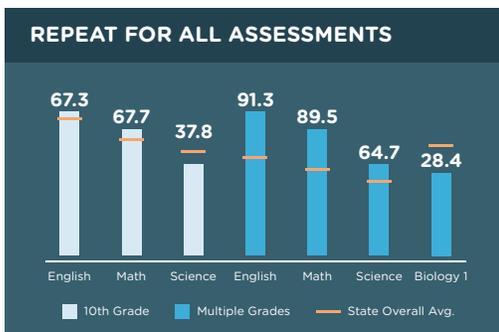
86% of FRL students at New Mission were proficient on the state assessment for 10th grade math.



Step 2:

Compare the percent of FRL students who reached proficiency at that school to ALL students in the state who took that assessment.

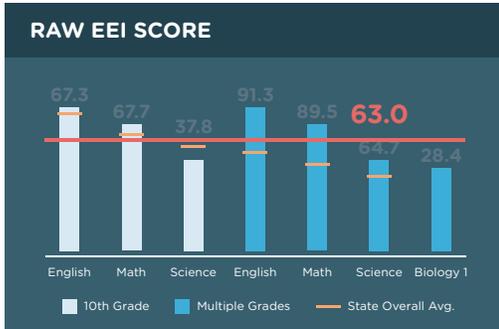
The 86% proficiency rate at New Mission is above average when compared to ALL students in Massachusetts who took the 10th grade math assessment. That rate of proficient low-income students equals a standardized score of 67.7 on a scale from 0-100.



Step 3:

Repeat Steps 1 and 2 to get a score for every subject/grade assessment at that school.

The scores reflect FRL student proficiency at New Mission compared to ALL students in the state. For example, FRL students outperformed the state average in 10th grade math but underperformed the state average in 10th grade science.



Step 4:

Take an average of all subject/grade scores to arrive at a school’s raw EEI score.

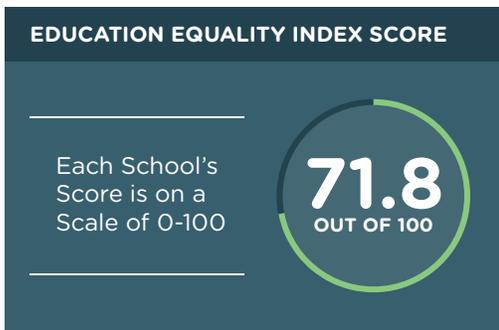
The average score at New Mission is 63.0. It is weighted based on the number of students tested in each subject/grade.



Step 5:

Adjust the school’s score to more fairly compare schools serving a high percentage of FRL students.

New Mission serves a much higher percentage of FRL students than the national average so the score is slightly increased by 8.8.



Step 6:

Each school’s adjusted percentile is its Education Equality Index score.

Out of 1,669 schools in Massachusetts, New Mission’s adjusted score puts it in the 71.8th percentile. The school’s EEI score is 71.8.

How We Calculate City and State Scores

To determine a city's score, the Education Equality Index averaged scores for every school with an address in the city boundary. Each school's score is weighted based on total enrollment as reported by the state's department of education. It is important to note that a city boundary is not the same as a school district boundary.

State scores are created using the same method. Each school in the state is weighted based on total enrollment as reported by the state's department of education.

What Do the Education Equality Index Scores Mean?

68-100 = No Achievement Gap

Students from low-income families in a given school, city, or state reach proficiency at a higher rate than their peers, on average.

50-67.9 = Small Achievement Gap

Students from low-income families in a given school, city, or state reach proficiency at a similar rate as all students, on average.

38-49.9 = Large Achievement Gap

Students from low-income families in a given school, city, or state reach proficiency at a higher rate than most students from low-income families, but at a lower rate than all students, on average.

0-37.9 = Massive Achievement Gap

Students from low-income families in a given school, city, or state reach proficiency at a lower rate than students from other low-income families, on average.

Appendix A

The Education Equality Index features school and city-level data for 35 states for which data is available and the 100 largest cities within those states.

State-level EEI scores are provided on the website but are not the best way to compare states. Their absolute EEI scores are highly correlated to the percentage of students in the state who qualify for free and reduced price lunch. They are helpful when determining how cities within a specific state performed compared to the state average and for noting state trajectories.

City Rankings (2014)

EI SCORE RANKING	CITY, STATE	EI SCORE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH ³
1	Hialeah, Fla.	60.9	83%
2	Gilbert, Ariz.	59.6	18%
3	Miami	57.7	73%
4	El Paso, Texas	56.2	74%
5	Irvine, Calif.*	55.3	14%
6	San Francisco*	51.1	63%
7	Scottsdale, Ariz.	50.8	20%
8	Garland, Texas	50.5	67%
9	New York	49.6	70%
10	Chandler, Ariz.	48.5	33%
11	Washington, D.C. ⁴	48.1	61%
12	Plano, Texas	48.1	28%
13	Spokane, Wash.	48	53%
14	Mesa, Ariz.	47.4	53%
15	Henderson, Nev.	47.2	37%
16	Orlando, Fla.	47.1	65%
17	Austin, Texas	47.1	50%
18	Glendale, Ariz.	45.5	51%
19	Chicago	43.3	87%
20	Albuquerque, N.M.	43.1	64%
21	Houston	43	74%
22	Tampa, Fla.	43	64%
23	San Diego*	42.7	52%
24	Dallas	42.2	84%
25	Fremont, Calif.*	41.8	19%

³ This indicates the estimated percentage of students in the city who receive free or reduced price lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Estimates were calculated using total school enrollment and percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch in each city using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

⁴ Washington, D.C. Education Equality Index scores were calculated by comparing low-income student proficiency in D.C. to all students in D.C.

EI SCORE RANKING	CITY, STATE	EI SCORE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
26	Phoenix	41.7	63%
27	Chula Vista, Calif.*	41.3	47%
28	Arlington, Texas	40.2	65%
29	Las Vegas	40.2	63%
30	Fresno, Calif.*	39.1	76%
31	Charlotte, N.C.	38.9	64%
32	San Antonio	38.6	67%
33	Reno, Nev.	38.1	44%
34	Cincinnati	37.6	54%
35	Irving, Texas	37.6	72%
36	Jacksonville, Fla.	37.3	45%
37	Fort Worth, Texas	37.3	67%
38	Fort Wayne, Ind.	36.9	49%
39	Lubbock, Texas	36.5	63%
40	Pittsburgh	36.3	43%
41	Seattle	36.3	47%
42	Santa Ana, Calif.*	36.1	82%
43	Corpus Christi, Texas	35.7	61%
44	Modesto, Calif.*	35.6	68%
45	San Jose, Calif.*	35.4	49%
46	Tucson, Ariz.	35.3	49%
47	Portland, Ore.	34.4	52%
48	Jersey City, N.J.	34.2	76%
49	Fayetteville, N.C.	33.9	61%
50	Laredo, Texas	33.8	82%
51	Colorado Springs, Colo.	33.7	37%
52	Oakland, Calif.*	33.2	76%
53	Long Beach, Calif.*	32.6	70%
54	North Las Vegas, Nev.	32.4	74%
55	Newark, N.J.	32.2	85%

EI SCORE RANKING	CITY, STATE	EI SCORE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
56	Virginia Beach, Va.	31.8	38%
57	Los Angeles*	31.8	79%
58	Anaheim, Calif.*	31.6	74%
59	Philadelphia	31.2	79%
60	Toledo, Ohio	30.7	74%
61	Boise, Idaho	30.7	42%
62	Bakersfield, Calif.*	30.1	68%
63	Lincoln, Nev.	30	43%
64	Riverside, Calif.*	29.7	69%
65	Buffalo, N.Y.	29.4	61%
66	Louisville, Ky.	29.1	58%
67	Indianapolis	28.9	63%
68	Sacramento, Calif.*	28.4	71%
69	Boston	28.4	71%
70	Memphis, Tenn.	28.3	82%
71	Chesapeake, Va.	28.2	29%
72	Greensboro, N.C.	28	57%
73	Lexington, Ky.	27.9	43%
74	Tacoma, Wash.	27.7	44%
75	Kansas City, Mo.	27.7	62%
76	Nashville, Tenn.	27.2	71%
77	Norfolk, Va.	27.1	63%
78	Fontana, Calif.*	27	81%
79	Winston-Salem, N.C.	26.8	64%
80	Rochester, N.Y.	26.7	64%
81	Columbus, Ohio	25.9	75%
82	St. Petersburg, Fla.	25.7	52%
83	San Bernardino, Calif.*	25.4	92%
84	Moreno Valley, Calif.*	25.2	82%
85	Stockton, Calif.*	25.1	77%

E EI SCORE RANKING	CITY, STATE	E EI SCORE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
86	Providence, R.I.	24.7	84%
87	Richmond, Va.	24.2	55%
88	Denver	23.4	71%
89	Cleveland	22.8	88%
90	Oxnard, Calif.*	21.9	80%
91	Omaha, Neb.	21.1	50%
92	Raleigh, N.C.	20.5	42%
93	Aurora, Colo.	20.3	49%
94	St. Louis	19.8	61%
95	St. Paul, Minn.	18.8	69%
96	Durham, N.C.	17.9	65%
97	Minneapolis	16.2	69%
98	Milwaukee	14.7	84%
99	Madison, Wis.	10.6	49%
100	Des Moines	10.5	69%

City Rankings (By Pace of Change 2011-2014)

P ACE OF CHANGE RANKING	CITY, STATE	P ACE OF CHANGE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
1	Omaha, Neb.	31%	50%
2	Denver	31%	71%
3	Norfolk, Va.	30%	63%
4	Reno, Nev.	25%	44%
5	North Las Vegas, Nev.	25%	74%
6	Lincoln, Nev.	23%	43%
7	Orlando, Fla.	21%	65%
8	Memphis, Tenn.	19%	82%
9	Tampa, Fla.	18%	64%
10	Tacoma, Wash.	18%	44%

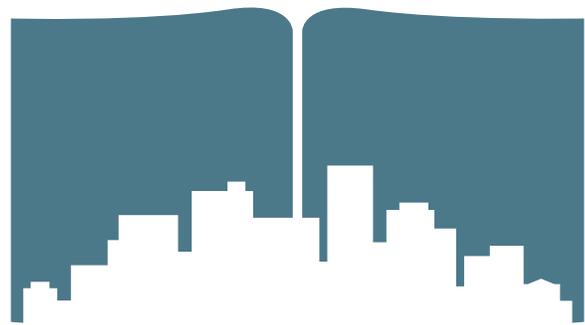
PACE OF CHANGE RANKING	CITY, STATE	PACE OF CHANGE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
11	Seattle	18%	47%
12	Henderson, Nev.	16%	37%
13	Spokane, Wash.	11%	53%
14	Las Vegas	10%	63%
15	Aurora, Colo.	10%	50%
16	Colorado Springs, Colo.	10%	37%
17	Indianapolis	10%	63%
18	Jersey City, N.J.	9%	76%
19	Jacksonville, Fla.	9%	45%
20	Pittsburgh	8%	43%
21	Kansas City, Mo.	7%	62%
22	Fremont, Calif.*	6%	19%
23	San Diego*	6%	52%
24	San Bernardino, Calif.*	6%	92%
25	Hialeah, Fla.	6%	83%
26	Anaheim, Calif.*	5%	74%
27	Los Angeles*	5%	79%
28	Riverside, Calif.*	5%	69%
29	Irvine, Calif.*	5%	14%
30	Miami	5%	73%
31	Louisville, Ky.	4%	58%
32	Portland, Ore.	4%	52%
33	Plano, Texas	4%	28%
34	Raleigh, N.C.	4%	42%
35	Fort Wayne, Ind.	3%	49%
36	Providence, R.I.	3%	84%
37	Boston	3%	61%
38	San Jose, Calif.*	3%	49%
39	Boise, Idaho	3%	71%
40	Arlington, Texas	2%	49%

PACE OF CHANGE RANKING	CITY, STATE	PACE OF CHANGE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
41	Chicago	2%	87%
42	Philadelphia	2%	79%
43	St. Louis	2%	61%
44	Fresno, Calif.*	1%	76%
45	Fontana, Calif.*	0%	81%
46	Anchorage, Alaska	0%	65%
47	Oxnard, Calif.*	0%	80%
48	San Francisco*	0%	63%
49	Bakersfield, Calif.*	0%	42%
50	Buffalo, N.Y.	0%	33%
51	Moreno Valley, Calif.*	0%	82%
52	Stockton, Calif.*	0%	77%
53	Virginia Beach, Va.	-1%	38%
54	Albuquerque, N.M.	-1%	64%
55	New York	-1%	70%
56	Austin, Texas	-2%	68%
57	Minneapolis	-2%	69%
58	Chula Vista, Calif.*	-2%	47%
59	Durham, N.C.	-3%	65%
60	Washington, D.C. ⁵	-3%	61%
61	Long Beach, Calif.*	-4%	70%
62	Laredo, Texas	-4%	82%
63	Cincinnati	-5%	54%
64	El Paso, Texas	-5%	74%
65	Toledo, Ohio	-5%	74%
66	Fort Worth, Texas	-5%	67%
67	Chesapeake, Va.	-6%	29%
68	Santa Ana, Calif.*	-6%	82%
69	Rochester, N.Y.	-6%	64%
70	Modesto, Calif.*	-6%	68%

⁵ Washington, D.C. Education Equality Index scores were calculated by comparing low-income student proficiency in D.C. to all students in D.C.

PACE OF CHANGE RANKING	CITY, STATE	PACE OF CHANGE	FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH
71	Charlotte, N.C.	-6%	64%
72	Columbus, Ohio	-8%	75%
73	Lexington, Ky.	-8%	43%
74	Sacramento, Calif.*	-8%	71%
75	Cleveland	-8%	88%
76	Lubbock, Texas	-9%	63%
77	Newark, N.J.	-9%	85%
78	Des Moines	-9%	69%
79	Milwaukee	-10%	84%
80	San Antonio	-10%	67%
81	Oakland, Calif.*	-11%	76%
82	Madison, Wis.	-11%	49%
83	Nashville, Tenn.	-11%	71%
84	Fayetteville, N.C.	-12%	61%
85	St. Petersburg, Fla.	-14%	52%
86	Houston	-15%	74%
87	Garland, Texas	-17%	67%
88	Dallas	-18%	84%
89	St. Paul, Minn.	-20%	69%
90	Richmond, Va.	-21%	55%
91	Greensboro, N.C.	-22%	57%
92	Corpus Christi, Texas	-23%	61%
93	Winston-Salem, N.C.	-23%	64%
94	Irving, Texas	-23%	72%

* This score was calculated using 2013 data. California Department of Education did not record 2014 test results during transition to Smarter Balanced Assessment System.



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