



The 2010 Broad Prize

30 Large Urban School Districts Show Better Relative Academic Performance Than Their States for African-American, Hispanic, or Low-Income Students

December 2010

A new data analysis, based on data collected as part of The Broad Prize process, provides insights into which large urban school districts in the United States are doing the best job of educating traditionally disadvantaged groups: African-American, Hispanics, and low-income students.

Since 2002, The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation has awarded The Broad Prize to the large urban school district that has made the most progress nationwide in raising student achievement, narrowing achievement gaps between income and ethnic groups, and improving college readiness. The independent review board and jury that select the Broad Prize finalists and winner each year rely on extensive data collection and analysis of academic performance levels and improvement rates in the nation's 100 largest urban school districts. That data analysis includes state assessment data, college readiness indicators (e.g., Advanced Placement, SAT, and ACT), graduation rates, and Adequate Yearly Progress.

This brief is the first to hone in on data collected during The Broad Prize process in order to report which of the 100 Broad Prize-eligible school districts are performing better than their state averages in serving income and ethnic subgroups.

The 30 districts identified in this brief rose to the top through a special analysis of 2009 state reading and mathematics assessment data collected during the 2010 Broad Prize process. Half of these school districts are in Texas or California. In all, cities in 11 states and the District of Columbia were found to be outperforming their state averages in subgroup achievement.

HOW TO USE THIS ANALYSIS

- **School district leaders and school boards can identify which large urban school districts are their state's top performers in educating African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students, in order to consider replicating or learning from their [strategies](#). (See page 2.)**
- **State and federal policy leaders can develop policies or incentives to help ensure that other school systems adopt reform strategies similar to those being used by these districts.**
- **Researchers can access the data to hone in on particular school districts and reforms worthy of further study. (See page 3.)**

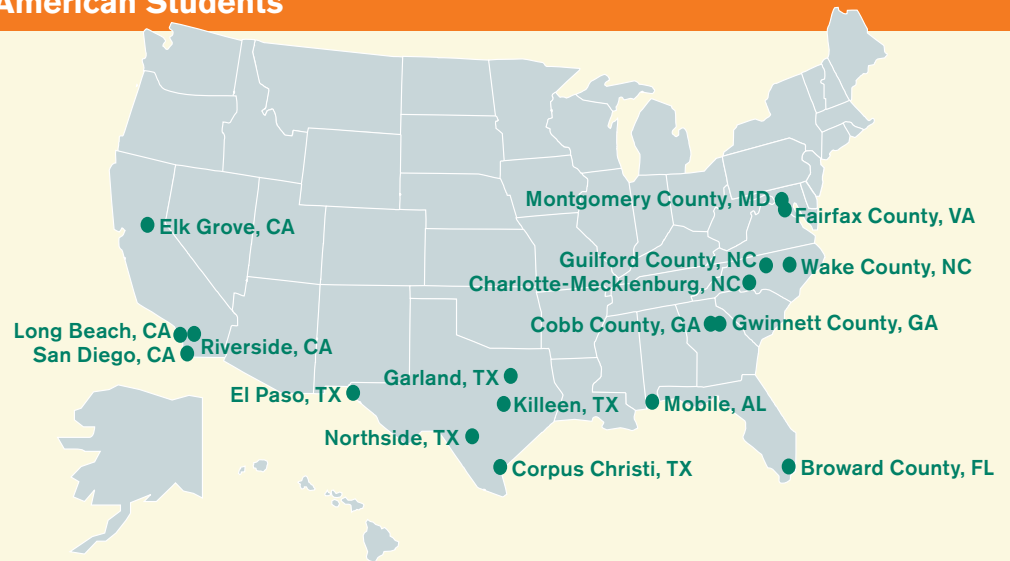
“None of these school districts would ever suggest that their work is complete. But many are leading their states – some, indeed, the nation – in improving the learning outcomes and life chances for low-income students and students of color. As school systems work to provide a quality education to *all* children, regardless of family background, we need to identify and learn from those who are paving the way.”

– Kati Haycock,
President, The Education Trust

Spotlight on Urban Districts Out-Performing Their States

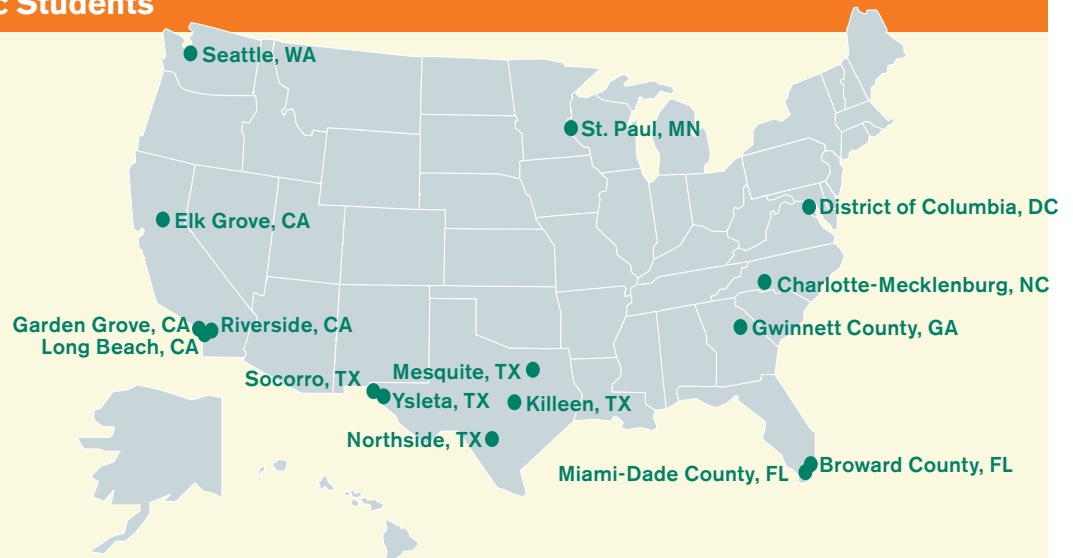
Better at Serving African-American Students

In the following **18** large urban school districts, a higher percentage of African-American students met or exceeded state standards in both reading and mathematics in 2009 than their respective state averages. In addition, a higher percentage of African-American students in these districts performed at the advanced level in both subjects than their respective states.



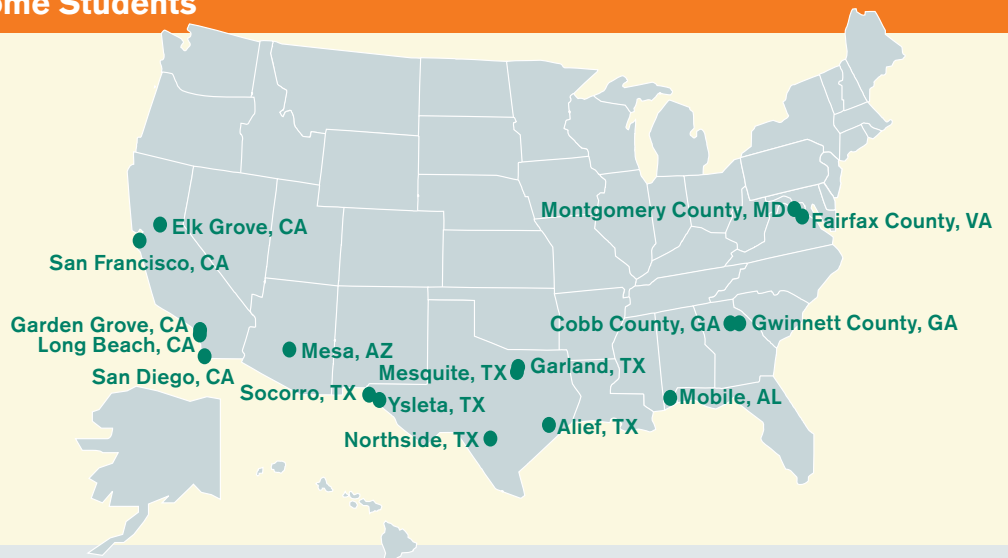
Better at Serving Hispanic Students

In the following **16** large urban school districts, a higher percentage of Hispanic students met or exceeded state standards in both reading and mathematics in 2009 than their respective state averages. In addition, a higher percentage of Hispanic students in these districts performed at the advanced level in both subjects than their respective states.



Better at Serving Low-Income Students

In the following **17** large urban school districts, a higher percentage of low-income students met or exceeded state standards in both reading and mathematics in 2009 than their respective state averages. In addition, a higher percentage of low-income students in these districts performed at the advanced level in both subjects than their respective states.



How They Are Succeeding

For more information on what these and other Broad Prize districts are doing to raise student achievement, including contact information, visit the [best practices section](#) of The Broad Prize website.

The school districts identified by this analysis have developed and implemented specific district-wide strategies to raise student achievement.

Take advantage of what they have learned.

The following are examples of effective policies and practices used by some of these districts to produce academic gains with subgroups, according to qualitative Broad Prize research, which includes extensive site visits. For additional examples of policies and best practices used in Broad Prize districts, please visit <http://www.broadprize.org/resources/overview.html>.

[Gwinnett County Public Schools, Ga., winner of the 2010 Broad Prize:](#)

- Rigorous curriculum (with explicit benchmarks in every grade and every subject) is relevant to students' lives.
- Central office exists to serve teachers, acting as a model and guide for instructional effectiveness.
- Superintendent provides skillful leadership, and the board works collaboratively, efficiently, and effectively.
- District's organizational structure supports student achievement and district goals.
- Smart budgeting ensures a primary focus on students.
- "Results-based accountability system" drives continuous improvement and holds all staff accountable.
- Each school prepares an annual data-driven improvement plan.

[Long Beach Unified School District, Calif., 2003 Broad Prize winner and finalist in 2002, 2007, 2008, and 2009:](#)

- Teachers use a common, core pedagogy that outlines specific expectations and instructional requirements and encourages higher-order thinking.
- Teachers receive regular objective feedback from classroom "walk-throughs" that are aligned to school and district goals.
- Student achievement goals drive the recruitment, selection, hiring, and placement of staff.
- District undergoes continuous improvement that is fueled by extensive student data analysis and comprehensive evaluation of progress.
- District keeps the community engaged and involved.
- Students have extensive school choice and individualized learning opportunities (e.g., about 40 percent of students attend an out-of-boundary school).

[Socorro Independent School District, Texas, 2009 and 2010 Broad Prize finalist:](#)

- Students at risk of dropping out are proactively identified, monitored, and supported, with those most at risk receiving extensive, one-to-one mentoring.
- A specialized instructional protocol is used to boost academic achievement among English Language Learners.
- Assessment data is routinely analyzed to make instructional and resource decisions.
- Staff monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and provide feedback to one another on how to improve.
- Principals are true instructional leaders.
- Central office holds schools accountable for academic performance and provides them with support necessary to improve.
- District develops an annual district improvement plan with community participation.

While this analysis identifies which large urban school districts are doing the best relative job of improving the academic performance of student subgroups, a great deal more can be mined from this data. For example:

- What more can be learned from the policies and practices of these 30 districts?
- What role, if any, does state policy play in states with multiple high-performing districts, such as California and Texas?
- Is continuity of leadership a factor? Funding? Governance? Talented administrators and teachers? An especially strong state or district curriculum? Professional development? Teachers' unions?
- What role, if any, do outside organizations, such as higher education institutions, businesses, or community groups play in these districts' success?
- How many other urban districts almost "made the cut," but missed because of shortfalls in one subject?

Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers interested in accessing the detailed data described in this brief may contact Sharon Meron at The Broad Foundation, smeron@broadfoundation.org.

Which School Districts Were **Eligible** for the 2010 Broad Prize

- All K–12 districts serving more than 100,000 students (25 districts).
- All K–12 districts serving between 37,500 and 99,999 students in which more than 40 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch (FRSL), in which more than 40 percent of students come from minority groups, and that have an "urban designation" (i.e., Locale Code 11, 12 or 21 in the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data) (60 districts).
- The largest urban districts in states with no districts meeting the above criteria, as long as the district has an enrollment of at least 20,000 students and more than 40 percent FRSL or more than 40 percent minority students (11 districts).
- The next largest districts in the nation meeting the criteria of more than 40 percent of students eligible for FRSL, more than 40 percent minority, and an urban designation. The purpose of this criterion was to bring the total number of districts to 100 (4 districts).
- The three most recent winners of The Broad Prize (2007 New York City, 2008 Brownsville, Texas, and 2009 Aldine, Texas) were excluded from this analysis because these districts were ineligible for the 2010 Broad Prize by virtue of having won the award within the last three years.

Methodology

Under the methodology used in this analysis, which constitutes one element of the overall Broad Prize methodology, each district received an “out-performance percentage” score based on:

- The percentage of instances where it exceeded the state average in terms of African-American, Hispanic, or low-income students scoring *proficient or above* on the state’s reading and mathematics tests in 2009 *and*
- The percentage of instances where African-American, Hispanic, or low-income student scores at the *advanced* level exceeded the state average on state reading and mathematics tests in 2009.

For each student group, subject, and achievement level, a district could earn a maximum of three points, meaning its students performed better than their state peers at all three school levels – elementary, middle, and high school.

Elementary results include third through fifth grade, middle school results include sixth through eighth grade, and high school results include ninth through 12th grade. Aggregated results for each level were weighted by the number of test-takers in each grade. To be counted in this analysis, the subgroups at each grade level had to represent more than 5 percent of all test-takers at that level.

An “out-performance percentage” for each student group, subject, and achievement level was calculated as the number of instances where the district’s achievement rates exceeded the state average, divided by the number of available comparisons.

EXAMPLE: Percentages of low-income students testing at the proficient level or above on the state reading assessment in 2009.

School Level	DISTRICT A Percentage of students proficient or above in reading and math	STATE A Percentage of students proficient or above in reading and math	Out-performance instances	Available comparisons
Elementary	61%	60%	1	1
Middle	58%	59%	0	1
High	77%	75%	1	1
TOTAL			2	3
OUT-PERFORMANCE PERCENTAGE			2/3 = 67%	

Within each student group, the high-performing districts highlighted in this report were those that achieved out-

performance percentages of at least 50 percent in both subjects at the levels of proficient, above proficient, and advanced.

Note: The districts’ results generally were excluded from the state average, meaning state averages represented “rest of the state” results. This was especially important in states where very large districts enrolled a significant percentage of the state’s overall number of students; in such cases, a large district would largely have been compared to itself. For the District of Columbia, data for D.C. Public Schools were compared to “any other school” (such as public charters).

Cautions About Interpreting This Data

This analysis does not take into account the magnitude by which a district out-performed the rest of the state. Therefore, two districts in different states with identical out-performance percentages could have very different student proficiency results. That is, districts got credit for out-performing the state average for each group and subject, whether it was by 1 percentage point or 30.

Also, differences in available data and, as a result, the number of available points were not taken into account. That is, a district may have shown a 100 percent out-performance rate using three comparisons to the state (by including results for all three school levels), while another district may also have had a 100 percent outperformance rate using only one comparison (by only including elementary level results because data for middle and high schools were unavailable).

In addition, the magnitude by which a district outperformed the state had to be at least 0.5 in order to be counted. No statistical analyses were conducted to determine whether this was an appropriate significance threshold, and the threshold chosen could adversely impact districts in some states more than others. For example, the appropriate significance threshold may vary by state, depending on the rigor of state assessments.

Finally, differences between the district and the state in the socioeconomic composition of analogous groups (e.g., percentage of high-income African-Americans in the state versus low-income African Americans in the district) – as family income level is often a predictor of student performance – also were not taken into consideration in this analysis and may distort the results across districts.

About the Broad Prize

The Broad Prize, established in 2002, is the largest education award in the country given to school districts. The Broad Prize is awarded each year to honor urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among low-income and minority students.

The Broad Prize for Urban Education has four goals:

- Reward districts that improve achievement levels of disadvantaged students.
- Restore the public's confidence in our nation's public schools by highlighting successful urban districts.
- Create competition and provide incentives for districts to improve.
- Showcase the best practices of successful districts.

Each year, Broad Prize scholarships are awarded to graduating high school seniors in the finalist and winning districts who demonstrate a record of academic improvement during their high school careers, as well as have a financial need. Seniors from the winning and finalist districts are eligible for two- or four-year scholarships of up to \$20,000, depending on the type of higher education institution they choose to attend.

The Broad Prize is awarded by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, which was established by entrepreneur and philanthropist Eli Broad to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science, and the arts.

“These 30 districts offer inspiration and hope to every educator, parent, leader, and citizen who is committed to preparing students for college, careers, and life in the 21st century. At the same time, we need to be concerned that more than two-thirds of America’s large urban districts still trail their state averages in serving traditionally under-served students. We must learn from and replicate successful district practices nationwide.”

*– Eli Broad, founder of
The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation*