

The Broad Prize: A platform for examining and showcasing success in urban education

Celebrating and perpetuating success

The National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) has been honored to be part of *The Broad Prize for Urban Education* since its inception in 2001. *The Broad Prize* is an annual award created and funded by The Broad Foundation to honor urban school districts making the greatest overall improvement in student achievement while at the same time reducing achievement gaps across ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students. One million dollars in student scholarships are awarded to deserving students in five finalist districts each year through this award.

The Broad Prize process has also brought value to urban educators, we hear from past winners and participating districts. They place a high value on information gained during the evaluation and selection process and opportunities to network with other urban educators. In addition, the inspiring stories from the most successful urban districts from across the country, along with evidence of their practices, help other urban school and district leaders find ways to address similar challenges.

All of The Broad Foundation's programs are intently focused on urban improvement and reflect a deep commitment to urban school students across the country. The contribution *The Broad Prize* is making to public education is truly unique in that it allows us to recognize and examine excellence in urban education and perpetuate it at the same time.

This year's award winners

2005 Broad Prize finalists:

- Aldine Independent School District near Houston
- Boston Public Schools
- New York City Department of Education
- Norfolk Public Schools
- San Francisco Unified School District

Selecting the winners

NCEA manages the selection process for *The Broad Prize* using achievement data to identify those districts showing significant success. In addition to strict adherence to achievement data as the measure of success, NCEA uses a consistent framework to investigate successful practices of each of these districts and their schools, and collects compelling real-life examples and documentary evidence linked to each practice.

Details of *The Broad Prize* evaluation and selection process, along with evidence of successful practices, are shared on our publicly available website (www.just4kids.org) and provide NCEA and others much needed content to inform urban education reform and school improvement efforts throughout the country.

Practices shared through a framework

NCEA has structured findings from investigating *The Broad Prize* finalists over the past four years into the same five broad themes used to examine practices of high-performing schools and systems included in NCEA’s continuing best practice studies. Funding for 2004-2005 NCEA state best practice studies has been made possible through a challenge grant from The Broad Foundation. To date NCEA has studied just over 350 high-performing schools and systems in fourteen states. This structure, the *Framework of School System Practices*, is further defined by practices related to those themes at three school levels—district, school, and classroom.

- Curriculum and academic goals;
- Staff selection, leadership, and capacity building;
- Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements;
- Monitoring progress: compilation, analysis, and use of data; and
- Recognition, intervention, and adjustments

The *Framework* attempts to capture the general principles NCEA found operational in organizations marked by sustained high performance. Equally important, NCEA has provided information on contextual variables that define how any particular practice appears at a given school.

The *Framework* used as a tool

The *Framework of School System Practices* provides a strong organizational tool to interactively consider school and district improvement efforts in light of the practices of “the best” in our industry. Specifically the *Framework*:

- Provides a structure for organizational functions most directly impacting the improvement of instruction
- Features those observable, interdependent practices found to be present in different

quantity or quality in consistently high-performing systems

- Is a composite picture built from many individual cases
- Contains findings that emanate from schools with somewhat varied demographics and in a number of states
- Is not a compendium of programs and strategies to adopt
- Is designed to paint a picture of high-performing schools
- Is continually updated with visits to high- and average-performing schools

Schools and districts in need of improvement can immediately use the *Framework of School System Practices* and *Self-Audit* tools online as a starting point to structure plans and improvement strategies. To access these tools, along with results of Broad Prize and other Best Practice study investigations conducted by NCEA, logon to www.just4kids.org and click on Best Practices.

NCEA and Just for the Kids

NCEA is a collaboration of The University of Texas at Austin, Education Commission of the States and Just for the Kids. NCEA’s mission is to inform, inspire and improve learning through the effective use of school and student data and the identification and replication of best practices found in high-performing districts, schools and classrooms. NCEA is the national sponsor of *Just for the Kids School Improvement Tools and Services* which present complex data in a way that is fair, actionable and available for all members of our public school communities. NCEA works in partnership with a growing number of *Just for the Kids* state affiliate partners, currently in more than twenty states.

For more information visit www.just4kids.org or contact the National Center for Educational Accountability; 4030-2 West Braker Lane; Austin, TX 78759; 800.762.4645 or 512.232.0770; Fax: 512.232.0777; jspence@just4kids.org.