

National Center for Educational Accountability

national sponsor of Just for the Kids

Inspire

Seeing is Believing: Inspiring evidence from successful urban schools and districts

Celebrating those who are meeting the challenge

The majority of news and statistics about our urban schools emphasize a variety of challenges, all of which sound almost impossible to overcome. The National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) and The Broad Foundation are pleased to present compelling evidence from five of our nation's highest achieving urban districts, proving that learning and teaching success is possible in spite of these challenges.

The Broad Prize

The Broad Prize for Urban Education is an annual \$1 million 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.

What follows spotlights the 2004 winner and finalists and announces the release of some great web-based resources for educators everywhere to learn from and use.

2004 award winners

"Inner city public school children will benefit from resourceful and innovative leadership, and our country will share in the success and prosperity as a whole. These five districts represent the best of our nation in raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps" said *Eli Broad*, founder of *The Broad Education Foundation*.



2004 Broad Prize winner: Garden Grove Unified School District – Anaheim, California

Four finalists:

- Aldine Independent School District - Houston, Texas
- Boston Public Schools - Boston, Massachusetts
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools - Charlotte, North Carolina
- Norfolk Public Schools - Norfolk, Virginia

Seeing is believing!

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.

“Investigating practices and benchmarking them against what we know about teaching and learning in the nation's most successful schools and districts is essential in the improvement process,” said Dr. Jean Rutherford, developer of the framework and Director of Education Initiatives for NCEA.

Leveraging their success

School and district documentation along with video clips of interviews of 2004 and 2003 winning and finalist district and school personnel telling the story of their success are *now available* at www.nc4ea.org (Click on the 2004 Broad Prize icon.) 2005 Broad Prize results and evidence will be available this fall.

Detailed examples and descriptions on this website are based on proven success and are intended to provide ideas and a starting place for districts and schools looking for ways to improve. “At the same time, this website provides an incredible opportunity for successful districts to share time invested on perfecting their practices with other districts” stated Dr. Heather Zavadsky, NCEA project director for the Broad Prize.

NCEA also provides sample evidence of successful practices collected during statewide studies of consistently high-performing schools and districts with all types of student populations and learning environments on the same website. More than 300 school systems have been part of NCEA's state study investigations over the past 4 years of elementary and middle schools in 13 states. Funding for 2004-2005 NCEA state best practice studies has been made possible through a matching grant from The Broad Foundation.

Broad's urban leadership

The Broad Foundation's programs are intently focused on the mission of urban improvement and show a deep and long-term commitment to the great benefit of urban school students across the country.

In addition to honoring achievement, The Broad Foundation seeks to train a broad, deep bench of current and aspiring leaders in education; redefine the traditional roles, practices and policies of school board members, superintendents, principals and labor union leaders; attract and retain the highest quality talent to leadership roles in education and equip school systems and their leaders with modern tools for effective management. More background is available at www.broadfoundation.org.

Making data actionable

The National Center for Educational Accountability works to raise academic standards and increase student achievement by:

- Promoting the improvement of state data collection and the creation of statewide longitudinal student information systems to improve decision making;
- Using data to create *Just for the Kids* websites that focus communities on the potential of every school;
- Conducting research using longitudinal student data;
- Identifying consistently high-performing schools;
- Identifying and promoting the practices that distinguish consistently high-performing schools from other schools;
- Implementing services that help educators close the achievement and practices gaps between their own schools and consistently high-performing schools.

*The National Center for Educational Accountability is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (EIN 01-0577238). Sponsoring organizations include Just for the Kids, The University of Texas at Austin and the Education Commission of the States. For more information, contact Janet Spence, Director of Communications: **National Center for Educational Accountability** c/o: 4030-2 W. Braker Lane, Austin, Texas 78759; phone 214.220.5340; fax: 512.232.0777; jspence@mail.utexas.edu and jspence@just4kids.org*