

Gwinnett County and Orange County School Districts Named Finalists for \$1 Million 2014 Broad Prize

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Contact: Swati Pandey
310.954.5049, spandey@broadfoundation.org

LOS ANGELES—Gwinnett County Public Schools in Georgia and Orange County Public Schools in Florida are the finalists for the \$1 million 2014 Broad Prize for Urban Education, The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation announced today.

The Broad (rhymes with “road”) Prize for Urban Education is an annual \$1 million award—the largest education prize in the country—that honors urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among low-income students and students of color. With two districts in the running this year, the top prize will be \$750,000 in college scholarships for graduating high school seniors in the winning district, and the runner-up will receive \$250,000 in college scholarships. The winner will be announced by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on Sept. 22 in New York City.

This year’s finalists were selected from among 75 of the largest districts in the country by a review board of 13 prominent education researchers, policy leaders, practitioners and executives from leading universities, education associations, civil rights advocacy organizations, think-tanks and foundations. The review board evaluated publicly available academic achievement data that were compiled and analyzed by RTI International, a leading global research institute.

This marks the first year since the prize’s founding in 2002 that the review board has opted to name only two finalists instead of either four or five as in previous years.

“While we have two districts that have shown some strong gains, we were incredibly disappointed with the overall progress of urban school systems across the U.S.,” said Christopher Cross, a member of The Broad Prize review board since 2002 and a former U.S. assistant secretary of education. “As a country, we have a long way to go before our public schools ensure every student—regardless of race or family income—reaches his or her full potential. When we evaluated the most recent data, we were struck by how incremental progress has been in recent years and by how far our public schools still have to go to provide a world-class education for all children.”

In selecting the finalists, the review board evaluated school district data including SAT, ACT and Advanced Placement participation rates and scores, graduation rates, results of state assessments in reading, math and science, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, student demographics including poverty, state test rigor, per pupil expenditures and district enrollment. The data analysis included more than 75 measures of how well a district has performed in the last four years in terms of raising student achievement, particularly for low-income students and students of color.

“The review board has sent a clear message: In too many urban school systems, students aren’t getting the quality of education they deserve,” said Bruce Reed, president of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, which awards The Broad Prize. “We congratulate the educators, staff, parents and students in Gwinnett County and Orange County. Every child should be able to attend good public schools that open the doors to the American dream.”

Seventy-five of the nation’s largest urban school districts were automatically eligible and considered for The Broad Prize. School districts cannot apply or be nominated. This year’s two finalist districts were recognized for producing better relative gains for Hispanic, African-American and low-income students. For example:

- A greater percentage of African-American students are reaching advanced academic levels in both Gwinnett County and Orange County than in other districts in their respective states.
- College-readiness in both districts has improved: Between 2010 and 2013, Gwinnett County’s participation rates and average scores on the SAT simultaneously increased for African-American students, while Orange County’s participation rates and passing rates on Advanced Placement exams simultaneously increased for all students and notably for Hispanic juniors and seniors.

Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla. is a first-time finalist. Gwinnett County Public Schools in Gwinnett County, Ga. previously won The Broad Prize, and this is the first year since its 2010 win that it was eligible for consideration. Gwinnett County was also a finalist in 2009. For a list of previous Broad Prize winners, visit http://broadprize.org/past_winners/map.html.

Over the next two months, teams of educational researchers and practitioners led by the education consulting company RMC Research Corporation will conduct a four-day site visit in each of the two finalist districts using a research-based rubric for district quality to gather qualitative information, interview district administrators, conduct focus groups with teachers and principals and observe classrooms. The teams will also interview parents, community leaders, school board members and union representatives. A selection jury of prominent individuals from business, industry, education and public service will then evaluate both the student achievement data and the qualitative site visit reports to determine a winner.

For more information about The Broad Prize, this year’s finalists, the review board and selection jury, please visit www.broadprize.org. Previous Broad Prize data analyses are publicly available at www.broadprize.org/resources/75_districts.html and will be updated this fall with the 2014 analyses.

Founded by entrepreneur Eli Broad and his wife Edythe, both graduates of Detroit Public Schools, The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is a philanthropy that seeks to ensure that every student in an urban public school has the opportunity to succeed. Bringing together top education experts and practitioners, the foundation funds system-wide programs and policies that strengthen public schools by creating environments that allow good teachers to do great work and enable students of all backgrounds to learn and thrive. Learn more about The Broad Foundation at www.broadeducation.org, at [Facebook.com/broadfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/broadfoundation) and on Twitter [@broadfoundation](https://twitter.com/broadfoundation).

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