

HISD NAMED AMERICA'S TOP URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Houston Independent School District was awarded the most coveted award in public education today because of Houston students' consistently strong academic achievement over a four-year period. The Broad Prize for Urban Education comes with \$550,000 in college scholarships for graduating seniors.

HISD is now the nation's first two-time winner of the prestigious award, which recognizes the public school system that has consistently demonstrated the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among poor and minority students. HISD won the first Broad Prize awarded in 2002.

Accepting the award from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan in Washington, D.C., Superintendent Terry Grier credited HISD's teachers first and foremost for the district's achievement.

"We've seen lots of programs and initiatives aimed at raising student achievement come and go. Some worked, and some haven't. But one thing remains constant: Students learn best when they have great teachers. Nothing – and I mean nothing – has more impact on learning than the quality of the teacher in the classroom," Dr. Grier said. "In Houston, our staff of 11,000-plus teachers is quite simply the best. Period. These teachers are working under the leadership of nearly 300 principals – campus-level CEO's who work tirelessly to make sure their teachers have the tools and training they need to drive achievement. To our teachers, principals, and all staff members on Team HISD, I say: Bravo. Well done."

America's 75 largest school districts are eligible for the Broad Prize. Four finalists were identified last spring based upon the findings of a wide-ranging review of student achievement data from the 2008-2009 school year through the 2011-2012 school year in an effort to reward consistency. This year's other finalists were the Corona-Norco Unified School District in Riverside County, Calif.,

Cumberland County Schools, N.C., and the San Diego Unified School District, where Dr. Grier served as superintendent before coming to Houston in 2009. The winning district was then chosen after a panel of experts spent a week touring each of the four finalist districts, speaking with students, parents, teachers, principals, and other staff members.

The reasons why HISD was chosen as a Broad Prize finalist include:

HISD has the highest SAT participation rate among other urban districts for all students and specifically Hispanic and African-American students. Last year, 87 percent of Houston's students participated in the SAT, and 84 percent of Hispanic and 80 percent of African-American students took the exam. Even with a poverty rate 60 percent higher than the state average, HISD's SAT participation rate is about two-thirds higher than the state's average participation rate.

The increases in participation in Advanced Placement exams for all students and specifically for Hispanic students were the highest among other urban districts.

HISD's overall graduation rate improved twice as fast as other urban districts around the country. HISD's graduation rate, as shown by the average of three nationally recognized graduate rate estimation methods, increased 12 percentage points between 2006 and 2009, compared to an average 6 percent increase for the 75 Broad Prize-eligible districts over the same period.

Houston narrowed low-income and Hispanic student achievement gaps. In recent years, HISD narrowed the achievement gap between low-income students and the state's non-low-income students and between HISD's Hispanic students and the state's white students in elementary, middle and high school reading and math.