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JC schools win 125K prize

District is one of five finalists in U.S. for bigger award

Ricardo Kaulesar
Reporter staff writer

The Jersey City schools have won a \$125,000 national award, and they are one of five finalists for the \$500,000 top prize.

The Broad Prize for Urban Education is given to school districts across the United States that have improved student academic achievement while narrowing achievement gaps for different ethnic groups and income levels.

The other four finalists are New York City, Boston, Miami-Dade County, and Bridgeport, Conn.

The winner of the prize will receive \$500,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors, with the other four runners-up each getting \$125,000 in scholarships. The winner will be announced on Sept. 19 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

The prize has been given each year since 2002 by the Los Angeles-based Broad (pronounced "brode") Foundation. Last week, Jersey City officials welcomed researchers working on behalf of the Broad Foundation.
Epps proud

District Superintendent Dr. Charles Epps Jr. said in a statement, "As a superintendent, I feel honored by the accomplishments of the students and administrators. It is gratifying that such a prestigious foundation has recognized the district's academic achievement."

The scholarships will be awarded to students in May 2007 to college-bound youths not necessarily with top grades, but who have made the most improvements in their grades during their four years of high school.

Between May and July, teams of educational researchers will be interviewing district administrators, teachers, principals, as well as parents, school board members, union representatives and community leaders to gather data.

That data will then be studied by a jury of 13 prominent figures who will decide on the winning district.

More than broad look at JC schools

Researchers for the Broad Foundation introduced themselves Wednesday afternoon to some school members and the press at Liberty High School on Sip Avenue.

Questions were answered by Steve Polk, a retired Air Force lieutenant general; Dr. Heather Zavotsky, project coordinator for the Austin, Texas-based National Center for Educational Accountability and former schoolteacher in the Austin school district; and Broad Foundation spokesperson Erica Lepping.

Lepping said Jersey City was one of the five chosen out of 100 of the largest school districts in the United States based on existing data such as test scores on state standardized tests and improving grades.

Lepping said there were a total of seven researchers that visited three schools in the district - Liberty High School, Public School 28, and Public School 29 - for three days last week, rather than all schools, because of time constraints. They also met with a group of teachers, parents and community leaders chosen by district officials.

Zavotsky said, "It is not just performance data, we look at everything. We look at dropout rates, graduation rates, college readiness; we look the qualitative part of the system."

Rosalie Anglin, principal of Liberty High, said she was an "absolutely delighted" that the district was "recognized for all its efforts and accomplishments."

Mary Ann Hammer, an administrator for division B of the district and a longtime school employee, said she believed the district will not only be a finalist but will win the Broad Prize.

Ricardo Kaulesar can be reached at rkaulesar@hudsonreporter.com

