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A deserving harvest for Norfolk students

Much well-deserved fanfare erupted last year when Norfolk public schools won the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education.

Not only did little Norfolk beat out public school giants like Boston, New York City and San Francisco, but it nabbed \$1 million to boot.

Now that money is coming home to the place it's needed most: to the remarkable students who are the fruit of Norfolk's hard work, whose minds have been shaped and nurtured by the city's dedicated teachers and administrators.

Fifty-one graduating seniors from the Class of 2006 will receive \$10,000 each in scholarship money, courtesy of The Broad Foundation. That means five Norfolk high schools have bragging rights to an astonishing \$500,000-plus in scholarship funds their students have earned.

The list of colleges lucky enough to have them range from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the College of William and Mary to Tidewater Community College and Norfolk State University.

And 51 sets of parents are rejoicing. True, for many of those headed to private institutions, \$10,000 won't even pay for their first semester. But for others starting community or business college this fall, Norfolk's hard work - and theirs - means they'll have a free ride.

One aim of The Broad Prize - the nation's largest for a single school division - is to reduce the performance gaps among races and economic groups that so often bedevil urban schools. One look at the scholarship recipients' photos that accompanied a full-page announcement in Tuesday's Pilot, and it's obvious Norfolk has succeeded on that score.

The other aim, of course, is to reward success. And by helping these 51 students get to college - with scholarships, no less - Norfolk public schools deserve hearty congratulations, both for their prestigious prize and for a job very well-done.