

## Report Reveals How Broad Prize-Winning Charter Network Uncommon Schools Helps All High School Graduates Reach College

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, March 13, 2014**

Contact: Swati Pandey, The Broad Foundation  
[spandey@broadfoundation.org](mailto:spandey@broadfoundation.org), 310.954.5049  
Barbara Martinez, Uncommon Schools  
[bmartinez@uncommonschoools.org](mailto:bmartinez@uncommonschoools.org), 201.988.0059

LOS ANGELES—The practices used by the 2013 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools winner Uncommon Schools—where more than 90 percent of students graduate from high school and all graduates are admitted to college—are detailed in a new report released today by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation.

The report, “Turning Urban Schools Into Springboards to College,” details how Uncommon Schools, a network of 38 public charter schools in New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts that serves nearly 10,000 low-income, African-American and Latino students, has created a college-going culture with high academic results. All of Uncommon’s high school seniors take the SAT, and their average score in 2012 was higher than the college readiness benchmark set by the College Board. Uncommon Schools has also closed income and ethnic achievement gaps four times as often as charter networks across the country with similar demographics.

The report’s findings are based on a four-day site visit to the charter network led by RMC Research Corporation, a national education consulting company, and conducted by a team of education researchers and practitioners. RMC evaluated the school system against a research-based framework and multiple rubrics of effective charter school and school system policies and practices. Researchers interviewed administrators, teachers, principals, parents, students and community leaders, analyzed extensive documents, and observed classrooms.

“If our national priority is to make sure every child is prepared for college, we need more success stories like the Uncommon Schools network of public charters,” said Bruce Reed, president of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. “By laying out the key practices behind Uncommon’s results—such as teacher coaching and a longer school day—we hope other public schools will apply similar strategies to make high academic achievement common for all students.”

Among the strategies researchers believe to be likely contributors to the success of Uncommon teachers and students are:

1. A governance structure where each school is co-led by a director who oversees operations and a principal who focuses on teacher support;
2. Frequent analysis of data, including quarterly assessments that help principals and teachers discover patterns in student learning so they can tailor instruction to reach every student;
3. Consistent and frequent teacher training and support, including intensive coaching on the techniques of effective teaching and one-on-one weekly sessions with an instructional leader;
4. A school culture that emphasizes joy, social justice and character; and
5. A longer school day and year.

“Uncommon Schools are indeed uncommon, especially in the way that they are able to help all students reach their potential,” said Shelley Billig, vice president of RMC Research Corporation and lead researcher of the report. “Teachers challenge the children to think deeply and to develop self-efficacy—and that ‘can-do’ attitude carries the young people through, no matter how difficult the work. Parents know that if their children go to Uncommon, they *will* be prepared for college.”

The Broad (rhymes with “road”) Prize for Public Charter Schools is an annual \$250,000 award honoring public charter school systems that have demonstrated the most outstanding overall student performance and improvement in the nation in recent years, while reducing achievement gaps for low-income students and students of color. It is the sister award to The Broad Prize for Urban Education that is awarded to traditional public school districts. The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation created both awards to help schools and school districts across America learn from innovative public school systems producing the strongest student outcomes. Uncommon Schools was selected as the 2013 winner by a nine-member review board of prominent education researchers, policy leaders, practitioners and executives from around the country who evaluated publicly available student achievement data on 27 large established charter school systems. The Broad Foundation did not play a role in selecting the winner.

Of the eligible charter networks, Uncommon Schools had the best overall student academic performance between 2009 and 2012. Uncommon currently serves 9,900 students in grades K-12, managing 38 schools in New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts. Ninety-seven percent of its students are African-American or Hispanic, and 80 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch. They outperform students in traditional school districts that serve students with similar family incomes, and their low-income and African-American students often rank in the top 30 percent of their states on state assessments. African-American students in every Uncommon school have closed more than half of the achievement gaps between African-American and white students on reading, math and science assessments. Forty-nine percent of Uncommon graduates from the classes of 2004-2007 have earned bachelor’s degrees, according to the CMO, which is four times the national rate for low-income students.

“Uncommon Schools is a shining example of great public charter schools changing the course of children’s lives. Even though 80 percent of Uncommon’s nearly 10,000 students across Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York are low-income, these students are outperforming their peers statewide,” said Nina Rees, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. “Results like this are indeed uncommon—and, by all measures, inspiring—to us all.”

Uncommon Schools plans to use its \$250,000 in Broad Prize winnings to offer high school and college counseling and mentorship for Uncommon Schools high school seniors and alumni in New York and Massachusetts. The funds will also support the salary of a director of college completion, who is helping Uncommon students advance to and graduate from college.

For more information about Uncommon Schools’ student outcomes and The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools, visit: <http://www.broadprize.org/publiccharterschools/2013.html>.

The winner of the 2014 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools will be announced on July 1 at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools conference in Las Vegas.

For a list of organizations eligible for the 2014 award, visit <http://broadprize.org/publiccharterschools/eligible.html>. Organizations cannot apply for the award or be nominated.

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. For more information, please visit [www.broadeducation.org](http://www.broadeducation.org).

#####