

# The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools

2012 Winner Profile:

## YES Prep Public Schools

June 21, 2012 • National Charter Schools Conference • Minneapolis, Minn.



# **YES Prep Public Schools**

**Winner of the Inaugural  
Broad Prize for  
Public Charter Schools**

# YES Prep Public Schools

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YES Prep Public Schools was named the winner of the \$250,000 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools on June 21, 2012 at the National Charter Schools Conference. In evaluating publicly available student achievement data on 20 large established charter school systems across the country, a 14-member review board of national education experts found YES Prep Public Schools to have the best overall student academic performance.

## Overview

YES Prep Public Schools is a system of free, open-enrollment public middle and high schools in Houston with the mission of increasing the number of low-income students who graduate from a four-year college prepared to compete in the global marketplace and give back to their communities. YES Prep began in 1995 as a district elementary charter school program, then expanded to serve students in grades 6-12 and officially became a state charter school in 1998.

In 2011, YES Prep served more than 5,400 low-income minority students on 10 Houston campuses. Currently 9,000 students are on YES Prep waiting lists. YES Prep hopes to serve 10,000 low-income students in Houston by 2020. Its goal is to create a coordinated, comprehensive model that can replicate results in neighborhoods across Houston.

## Student Demographics

86% eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch

84% Hispanic

13% African-American

27% English language learners

90% first-generation college bound

Most students enter YES Prep at least one grade level behind in math and reading

## Financials

\$45.6 million annual budget

\$8,433 per pupil expenditure

## Philosophy

YES Prep schools are designed around the belief that low-income students can achieve at the same academic levels as their more affluent peers when given access to similar opportunities and resources.

## YES Prep Public Schools

# Results

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All of YES Prep's graduating seniors have been accepted to four-year colleges. Eighty percent of alumni have either graduated or are still enrolled in college. Among the reasons YES Prep Public Schools won the inaugural Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools:

**YES Prep demonstrated better student performance relative to other public school systems in their state than did other large urban CMOs on measures like achievement gap closures and student performance at advanced levels on state tests, according to The Broad Prize methodology. For example:**

**Eliminated nearly every income and ethnic achievement gap faced by urban schools nationwide—and closed gaps five times more often than other CMOs.** In 2011, YES Prep's low-income students performed better than the state's non-low-income students in math, science and reading at both the middle and high school levels. Similarly, YES Prep's Hispanic students performed better than their white peers statewide in the same areas. For example, in 2011, 97 percent of YES Prep's Hispanic students were proficient on the state middle school science assessment, compared with 89 percent of the state's white students. YES Prep's African-American students performed better than their white peers statewide in nearly all subjects and school levels.

**Hispanic and low-income students outperformed their peers statewide in reaching advanced academic levels more often than other large urban CMOs.** In 2011, the percentage of YES Prep's low-income students who performed at the highest achievement level (Commended) ranked in the top third in the state for every available comparison (middle and high school reading, math and science). In contrast, low-income students in Broad Prize-eligible CMOs on average ranked in the top third just 32 percent of the time. Similarly, in 2011, the percentage of YES Prep's Hispanic students performing at the Commended level ranked in the top third of comparisons with Hispanic students statewide every time, while eligible CMOs did so 44 percent of the time.

**YES Prep outperformed other large urban CMOs by demonstrating better student participation and performance on national measures like college readiness exams. For example:**

**Higher Advanced Placement participation and passing rates than other CMOs.** In 2011, 53 percent of YES Prep's Hispanic juniors and seniors took at least one AP exam, compared with The Broad Prize-eligible CMO average of 37 percent. Fifty-one percent of AP tests taken by Hispanic juniors and seniors in YES Prep Public Schools received passing scores, compared with the eligible CMO average of 33 percent.

**Outperformed other large urban CMOs and the national average in SAT participation and scores.** In 2011, 89 percent of YES Prep's Hispanic seniors took the SAT compared with The Broad Prize-eligible CMO average of 65 percent. YES Prep's African-American students achieved a higher average SAT-combined score for reading, writing and mathematics—1556—than any other eligible CMO. The national average for African-American students is 1273.

## YES Prep Public Schools

# Approach

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**YES Prep requires every senior to gain acceptance to a four-year college in order to earn their high school diploma.** Among the strategies YES Prep believes are key to getting students across the graduation stage and into college:

**Small, integrated schools.** Each campus accepts 140 students into each sixth-grade class and caps school capacity at 825 students.

**Rigorous college prep curriculum.** Students begin taking high school courses in the eighth grade to allow for more advanced coursework later, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual-enrollment courses.

**Adequate time to master challenging curriculum.** The schools offer a longer school day and school year, and after-school and weekend enrichment.

**Student support system.** Incoming sixth-graders, most of whom are performing below grade level, receive intensive onboarding and induction. All students have access to campus health services, academic and behavioral intervention, crisis intervention, counseling and parent outreach services. All teachers are given cell phones so that students and families can contact them anytime for additional support.

**Enrichment opportunities and systems of incentives keep students motivated.** Visits to universities are offered as incentives to learn. Juniors and seniors are matched with internships/summer programs at businesses, nonprofits and colleges worldwide. Annual research trips give most students their first opportunity to travel beyond Houston and visit colleges around the country.

**Service learning in low-income communities.** Every student logs hundreds of volunteer hours through a range of service learning opportunities integrated into the curriculum.

**Personalized college counseling and support through college.** At YES Prep, the student-to-college counselor ratio is 30:1 (compared to the state average of 400:1) and the program includes assistance researching colleges and completing applications; help with securing scholarships and financial aid; parent awareness; and alumni support.

**Close relationship with students' families.** Structured parental involvement activities keep parents intimately connected with their child's education.

# YES Prep Public Schools

## Empowerment

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**YES Prep was named one of the “Best Places to Work” by the Houston Business Journal in 2010.** Ranked among the top-performing organizations in Houston, YES Prep is the only public school system to ever make this list.

Among the strategies YES Prep uses to empower its teachers and staff to help students succeed:

A recognition that **high-caliber people**—who are willing to stay after school for tutorials, answer a student’s phone call late into the evening, have a conversation with a student during lunch, or work with a colleague to plan a lesson or cover a class—are the source of the organization’s strength.

Finding a balance between providing **campus autonomy** and creating systems that encourage staff to collaborate, be efficient and share best practices.

The **use of data** as a means to focus on areas of improvement and celebrate success.

A rigorous **teacher selection** and **evaluation** model.

An **efficient home office** that prioritizes pushing resources to the classroom.

YES Prep leaders meet regularly with leaders of the **Houston Independent School District** to **mutually share** lessons learned.

## Coming Up

This fall, Broad Prize researchers will visit YES Prep Public Schools to identify which strategies led to their impressive student results. That report will be released later this year.

## About

### The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation

Founded by self-made 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 enable good teachers to do great work and students of all backgrounds to learn and thrive. For more information, visit [www.broadeducation.org](http://www.broadeducation.org).

*The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools' data was collected and analyzed by MPR Associates, one of the nation's leading education research and consulting firms, based in Berkeley, Calif. For more information on the award, data, methodology and the review board who selected the winner, visit: [www.broadprize.org/publiccharterschools](http://www.broadprize.org/publiccharterschools).*

*Source of all other information in this publication: YES Prep Public Schools 2011 annual report or website.*

## **YES Prep Public Schools**

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## **The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools**

www.broadprize.org/publiccharterschools.html  
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