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LOS ANGELES—The successful strategies used by six urban school systems across the country to boost African-American student participation in and performance on Advanced Placement tests are detailed in a new report released today by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation.

The report, “The Road to Equity: Expanding AP Access and Success for African-American Students,” details how the following school systems are increasing college readiness of African-American students by improving their AP passing rates quickly enough to gain on their white peers while increasing or keeping participation rates steady:

- Cobb County School District, Ga.
- Fulton County School System, Ga.
- Garland Independent School District, Texas
- Jefferson County Public Schools, Ky.
- Orange County Public Schools, Fla.
- San Diego Unified School District

In looking to identify urban school districts with promising trends in student achievement and college-readiness, The Broad Foundation analyzed four years of AP exam participation and passing rates for students in the 75 districts whose demographics qualify them for consideration for the annual Broad Prize for Urban Education.

The foundation found that the districts were able to simultaneously raise performance on AP tests without losing ground on participation by employing many of the following practices and strategies:

1. Offer a rigorous curriculum beginning in elementary grades
2. Expand access to gifted programs
3. Analyze student results on precursors to college entrance exams—like PSAT and EXPLORE—to identify potential AP students and actively recruit them to enroll in AP courses
4. Provide extra academic and social support to students
5. Dramatically increase the number of AP course offerings
6. Offer additional teacher training and professional development
7. Instill confidence in students about their college-going potential
8. Educate parents about the benefits of AP

The College Board’s Advanced Placement program is a benchmark for academic rigor and offers high school students the opportunity to earn college credit, thus saving students time and money. Enrollment in AP courses has tripled since 2000 as districts moved to increase course offerings and broaden student recruits in the challenging courses.

“AP is an important predictor of college success when teachers and students use AP’s standards as an inspiration, developing through practice the most important academic skills needed in college,” said Trevor Packer, the College Board’s senior vice president for AP and instruction. “Data identify thousands of minority and low-income students...
who have the academic potential to succeed in Advanced Placement courses, but lack access or encouragement to pursue such opportunities. We celebrate the AP teachers and students of these six urban districts for their extraordinary accomplishments. Their successes show that with the right support systems and best practices, broader access to AP can provide a diversity of students with a stronger foundation for college and career success.”

The report found that in nearly all of the 75 Broad Prize-eligible school districts, the gap in both AP passing rates and participation rates between African-American students and their white counterparts is significant.

“This report underscores the need for districts to actively work to increase access to and success on AP tests,” said Rebecca Wolf DiBiase, managing director of programs for The Broad Foundation. “We are highlighting the practices in these six districts to demonstrate that improvement is possible. But progress needs to happen much faster and in all schools before we can truly ensure that all students have access to and the necessary preparation for success in college.”

The Education Trust also released the findings today of new research that low-income and students of color do not have equal access to AP and International Baccalaureate programs. The report, “Finding America’s Missing AP and IB Students,” reveals that most national participation gaps could be eliminated if every school with an AP program focused on encouraging and enrolling its low-income and students of color in the college preparatory courses.

The $1 million Broad Prize, established in 2002, is the largest education award in the country given to school districts. The Broad Prize is awarded each year to honor urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among students from low-income families and students of color.

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, visit www.broadeducation.org, and updates are available on Facebook and Twitter @broadfoundation. For more information about The Broad Prize, visit www.broadprize.org.

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