Achievement First, IDEA, Noble Network Named America’s Top Three Charter School Systems, Up for 2015 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools

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LOS ANGELES—Achievement First in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island, IDEA Public Schools in Texas, and Noble Network of Charter Schools in Illinois have been named America’s top three large charter school systems in the running for the 2015 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools, The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation announced today.

The $250,000 Broad (rhymes with “road”) Prize for Public Charter Schools, awarded to the best-performing public charter management organization in the country, will be announced on June 22 at the National Charter Schools Conference in New Orleans.

A 10-member review board of national education experts reviewed publicly available student performance and college-readiness data for 20 of the country’s largest public charter management systems and found that Achievement First, IDEA Public Schools and Noble Network had the best overall performance, especially serving primarily low-income students of color. The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, which funds the prize, did not play a role in selecting the top three charter systems.

Achievement First is an expanding network of 29 college-preparatory K-12 public charter schools in five cities in Connecticut (New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford), New York (Brooklyn) and Rhode Island (Providence). Of the more than 9,500 students served, 98 percent are African-American or Hispanic, and 83 percent are low-income.

IDEA Public Schools is a growing network of K-12 public charter schools in Texas focused on sending all students to college. IDEA serves more than 20,000 students—95 percent of whom are Hispanic, with 84 percent low-income—in 36 schools throughout the Rio Grande Valley, Austin and San Antonio.

Noble Network of Charter Schools is an expanding system of secondary schools in Illinois that serves 10,000 students who attend 16 high schools and one middle school. Noble’s students are 95 percent African-American or Hispanic, and 89 percent are low-income.

Among the reasons these three public charter school systems were selected as top performers:
In 2014, 88 percent of Achievement First’s high school seniors took the SAT exam, compared to the eligible CMO average of 61 percent. Achievement First’s seniors earned an average SAT score of 1407, compared to the eligible CMO average of 1317.

In 2014, advanced proficiency rates for IDEA’s Hispanic students in all comparisons—in reading, math and science across elementary, middle and high school—ranked in the top 30 percent of Texas when compared to Hispanic students in the rest of the state, whereas Hispanic students in the remaining eligible charter management organizations ranked in the top 30 percent of their respective states in only a quarter of comparisons.

In all 2014 comparisons—middle and high school reading, math and science—Noble Network’s African-American students ranked in the top 30 percent of Illinois when compared to black students in the rest of the state. By comparison, African-American students in the remaining eligible charter management organizations ranked in the top 30 percent of their respective states in less than a quarter of comparisons.

“As public charter schools continue to educate more and more students nationally, we want to recognize the high performers in the hopes that other charters and traditional public schools can learn from their success,” said Bruce Reed, president of The Broad Foundation. “This year’s top three charter systems have demonstrated that their students can learn at high levels, with a focus on preparing them for and supporting them through college.”

Non-profit charter management organizations eligible for the 2015 award operated a minimum of five schools since 2010-11 with at least 2,500 students and served sizable percentages of low-income students and students of color. Organizations cannot apply for the award nor be nominated. For a list of eligible CMOs, visit http://www.broadprize.org/publiccharterschools/eligible.html.

In selecting the top three CMOs, The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools review board examined data from the 2012-2013 and 2013-14 school years, collected and analyzed by RTI International, a leading global research institute. The review board considered student outcomes, college readiness indicators, scalability, size, poverty and demographics, and selected the top three charter management organizations based on overall student performance and progress closing achievement gaps.

The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools awards $250,000 to the large public charter school system determined to have the best overall performance serving low-income students of color. The prize winnings must be used for college-readiness efforts. Previous winners of The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools include KIPP Schools in 2014, Uncommon Schools in 2013 and YES Prep Public Schools in 2012. Winners are ineligible for three years following their win.

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.

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