Los Angeles – The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems released today 75 Examples of How Bureaucracy Stands in the Way of America’s Students and Teachers, giving parents, teachers and voters a critical resource for understanding the systemic crisis in America’s public schools.

This week’s release of the PDK/Gallup poll of the “Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools” showed that the number of Americans who expressed confidence in public schools as a public institution has dropped 5 percentage points since the last poll was taken five years ago, a drop Gallup calls “significant.”

“While Americans may not be able to point to one particular cause, an increasing number know instinctively that something is not right in our public schools,” said Becca Bracy Knight, managing director of The Broad Center, which runs The Broad Superintendents Academy and The Broad Residency. “They know too many students and teachers aren’t receiving the help they need to be successful.”

75 Examples of How Bureaucracy Stands in the Way of America’s Students and Teachers reports on challenges in large urban districts commonly encountered over the course of research and site visits associated with The Broad Prize for Urban Education, The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems and The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation’s philanthropic work over the past decade.

“Bureaucratic systems, policies and practices that have been built up over decades in inner-city school districts may in fact pose the single greatest challenge facing our teachers and students,” said Rebecca Wolf DiBiase, managing director of programs at The Broad Foundation, which funds The Broad Center. “Bureaucratic policies and procedures, which may have been originally well-intended to comply with laws and regulations, often don’t allow school systems today to pursue their core mission: advancing student achievement. As a result, fewer resources actually reach the classroom, teachers don’t receive the support they need to meet individual student needs, and many people in and around these systems are disheartened, with little faith that conditions will improve.”

“The sheer number of significant challenges facing America’s urban school districts demonstrates that if we are to ever meet modern student and teacher needs and catch up with the rest of the world in terms of academic performance, our school systems must be transformed,” DiBiase said.
As daunting as these challenges may seem, research shows some urban school systems are making strides in reducing bureaucracy and replacing it with effective administrative environments that support students and teachers.

For example, districts in Corona-Norco in Southern California, Houston, Miami-Dade County, and Palm Beach County have made efforts to reduce bureaucracy, push resources to the classroom and empower teachers. As a result, these school districts have demonstrated the greatest overall urban student gains and achievement gap closures in the nation.

In addition, Houston’s YES Prep Public Schools, which predominantly serves low-income and minority students, has eliminated nearly every income and ethnic achievement gap faced by urban schools nationwide—and closed gaps five times more often than their peers. Last spring, all of YES Prep’s college seniors were accepted to college.

“All of these standout public school systems have several things in common,” said DiBiase. “They’ve set higher standards for teaching, learning and operations. They’ve pushed more resources to the classroom. They’ve empowered teachers with more time, flexibility, creativity and support to help students of all backgrounds learn. And they’ve begun to hold leaders and teachers reasonably responsible for student growth.”

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 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.

The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems, funded by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, is a nonprofit that seeks to prepare strong leaders of public school systems. Through The Broad Center’s two initiatives, The Broad Superintendents Academy and The Broad Residency for Urban Education, a growing network of school system leaders and managers are working to strengthen public schools by creating environments that allow good teachers to do great work and enable students of all backgrounds to learn and thrive. These professionals are passionate about public education, have educational expertise and experience ensuring organizations run successfully. For more information, please visit: www.broadcenter.org