The Achievement Gap Is Large and Growing in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex

The Education Equality Index Shows Diminished Access to Equitable Schools for Low-Income Families

DALLAS — According to the Education Equality Index (EEI), a first-of-its-kind tool released today, a rapidly shrinking number of students from low-income families in the Metroplex are likely to attend schools that put them on an equal playing field with their more advantaged peers. Between 2011 and 2014, the achievement gap in Dallas grew by an alarming 18 percent.

Although Texas has an achievement gap that is smaller than in 31 out of 35 states for which data is available, its gap is actually growing statewide and in its largest cities. In 11 of Texas’ biggest 13 cities, the achievement gap increased between 2011 and 2014. During the same period, Texas’ statewide achievement gap grew by 11 percent — meaning that an increasing number of students from Texas’ low-income families don’t attend schools providing them with equal educational opportunities.

Some Texas cities and schools show it is possible to break these trends. El Paso, where three out of every four students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, currently has the fourth smallest achievement gap of the 100 biggest cities in the nation for which data is available. In Arlington and Plano, the achievement gap narrowed in recent years.

“Students from low-income families in Dallas-Fort Worth region are falling further and further behind their more advantaged peers across the state and nation,” said Ethan Gray, founder and CEO of Education Cities. “The fact that the achievement gap widened by 18 percent in Dallas and five percent in Fort Worth illustrates the urgent need to address educational inequities. We, as a nation, have a long way to go to ensure our most vulnerable children have the opportunities they need to thrive.”

The Education Equality Index is the first national comparative measure of the achievement gap at the school, city and state levels, and identifies the regions where children from low-income communities are most likely to attend schools with small or nonexistent achievement gaps. Funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and developed in partnership by the foundation, Education Cities and GreatSchools, the EEI features school, city and state-level data covering the nation’s 100 biggest cities in 35 states.

The Education Equality Index also identifies the top 10 schools in each Metroplex city with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income
families. Of the schools on this list, Dallas’ Sam Houston Elementary School serves the highest percentage of students from low-income communities.

Key findings from the Education Equality Index include:
- With an EEI score of 41.6, Texas has the fourth smallest statewide achievement gap out of 35 states for which data is available.
- Although Texas’ EEI score is relatively positive, the state’s achievement gap grew by 11 percent between 2011 and 2014.
- Texas has 13 cities in the nation’s largest 100 cities by population. The gap widened in all Texas’ cities except Arlington and Plano.
- Metroplex cities included in the EEI are:
  - Arlington earns an EEI score of 40.2, indicating the city is home to the 28th smallest achievement gap in the nation. Positively, the gap narrowed by two percent between 2011 and 2014.
  - Irving earns an EEI score of 37.6, indicating it has the 35th smallest achievement gap in the nation. Alarmingly, the gap grew by 23 percent between 2011 and 2014.
  - Dallas earns an EEI score of 42.2, indicating it has the 24th smallest achievement gap in the nation. Alarmingly, the gap grew by 18 percent between 2011 and 2014.
  - Fort Worth earns an EEI score of 37.3, indicating it has the 37th smallest achievement gap in the nation. The gap grew by five percent between 2011 and 2014.
  - Garland earns an EEI score of 50.5, indicating it has the 8th smallest achievement gap in the nation. Alarmingly, the gap grew by 17 percent between 2011 and 2014.
  - Plano earns an EEI score of 48.1, indicating it has the 12th smallest achievement gap in the nation. Positively, the gap narrowed by four percent between 2011 and 2014.

Notably, the 10 most equitable schools in Dallas that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income families all have a nonexistent achievement gap. They are:
- Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy
- Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy at BF Darrell Middle School
- Dallas Environmental Science Academy
- Henry W. Longfellow Career Exploration Academy
- Irma Rangel Young Women's Leadership High School
- Irma Rangel Young Women’s Leadership Middle School
- Kathryn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy
- Sam Houston Elementary School
- School of Health Professions
- Trinidad Garza Early College High School at Mountain View

The top 10 Fort Worth schools with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income families are:
- Burton Hill Elementary School
- Charles Nash Elementary School
- David K. Sellars Elementary School
- E. Ray Elementary School
- Moore M. High Elementary School
- South Hi Mount Elementary School
- Sycamore Elementary School
The schools with the smallest achievement gaps in Irving, Plano, Arlington and Garland can be found at [www.educationequalityindex.org/texas](http://www.educationequalityindex.org/texas).

As detailed in the EEI, there are hundreds of schools across the nation where low-income students are achieving at levels that match or even exceed their more advantaged peers — proving that all children can excel in school when given the opportunity.

“Equality of opportunity is an American ideal,” said Ethan Gray, founder and CEO of Education Cities.

“The Education Equality Index shows that while we, as a nation, have a long way to go to ensure our most vulnerable children have the opportunities they need to thrive, there are schools in almost every city proving that equality is possible.”

This is the first in a series of releases intended to identify the practices that are closing the achievement gap at the quickest pace. To see more data from the Education Equality Index and use the interactive online tool, visit [www.educationequalityindex.org](http://www.educationequalityindex.org).

**About Education Cities**
Education Cities is a non-profit organization that convenes, advises, and supports a network of cities in their efforts to increase the number of great public schools. Learn more at [www.education-cities.org](http://www.education-cities.org).

**About GreatSchools**
Founded in 1998, GreatSchools is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit helping millions of parents find high-quality schools, support great learning, and guide their kids to great futures. GreatSchools offers thousands of articles, videos, and worksheets to help parents support their children’s learning. Last year, GreatSchools had more than 56 million unique visitors, including more than half of all U.S. families with school-age children. Headquartered in Oakland, California, GreatSchools partners with cities and states across the country to promote access to school quality data to families, particularly those in high need. Through its GreatKids program, GreatSchools promotes parenting for education success and teacher-parent collaboration.

**About the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation**
The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children living in urban poverty around the world. Headquartered in Austin, TX with satellite offices in New Delhi, India and Cape Town, South Africa, the Dell family foundation funds programs that foster high-quality public education and childhood wellness, and improve the economic stability of families living in poverty. The foundation has committed more than $1.2 billion to global children’s issues and community initiatives to date. Learn more at [www.msdf.org](http://www.msdf.org).

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