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Houston's Achievement Gap Is Large and Growing at an Alarming Pace, New Index Confirms

The Education Equality Index Shows Texas' Major Cities Are Home to Increasingly Inequitable Public School Systems

HOUSTON — According to the Education Equality Index (EEI), a first-of-its-kind tool released today, fewer students from Houston's low-income families are likely to attend schools that provide them with similar educational opportunities as their more advantaged peers. While Houston's achievement gap is currently smaller than 75 percent of the nation's largest cities, it grew by 15 percent between 2011 and 2014, mirroring state data trends.

Students from low-income families in Houston have access to a more equitable public school system than their peers in cities like Dallas and San Antonio, but would be better served in Austin and El Paso. The achievement gap is growing in 11 of the 13 largest cities in Texas.

"Students from low-income families in Houston 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 15 percent in Houston 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 usually only available to their more advantaged peers. 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 Houston with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income families. According to the EEI, the achievement gap at KIPP Sharp College Prep is nonexistent, meaning that its students from low-income families achieve at the same levels as their more advantaged peers in Texas and across the nation.

“We are proud to have four of our schools recognized among the top 10 Houston schools for closing the achievement gap,” said Sehba Ali, Superintendent of KIPP Houston Public Schools. “With thousands of students on our waiting list, we remain focused on ways we can help even more students achieve success in college and beyond.”

Key findings from the Education Equality Index include:

- Houston earns an EEI score of 43, indicating the city is home to the 21st smallest achievement gap in the nation.
- Alarming, between 2011 and 2014, the achievement gap in Houston grew by 15 percent, a pace faster than 85 percent of major U.S. cities.
- With an EEI score of 41.6, Texas has the 4th smallest statewide achievement gap out of 35 states for 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.

The top 10 Houston schools with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income families are:

- Alief Early College High School
- Houston Gateway Academy - Coral Campus
- Houston Gateway Academy Inc Elite
- KIPP Academy Middle
- KIPP Houston High School
- KIPP Sharp College Prep
- KIPP Shine Prep
- La Amistad Love & Learning Academy
- Project Chrysalis Middle School
- Victory Early College High School

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 Gray. “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.

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.

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.

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