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**MEDIA CONTACT**

Samuel Garrett-Pate

Ph: (323) 892-2080

[sgarrettpate@wearerally.com](mailto:sgarrettpate@wearerally.com)

## **Achievement Gap in Austin Is Smaller than in 80 Percent of Major U.S. Cities**

*The Education Equality Index Shows Achievement Gap Across Texas is Growing Rapidly, But Austin Resisting Statewide Trend*

**AUSTIN, Tex.** — According to the Education Equality Index (EEI), a first-of-its-kind tool released today, Austin's achievement gap between students from low-income families and their more advantaged peers is large but narrowing. While the achievement gap is widening in 11 of 13 major Texas cities, the gap in Austin remained relatively unchanged between 2011 and 2014, growing by just two percent.

"Austin has some great schools but the data shows we still have a long way to go to ensure all our schools are serving all the kids in the building," said Amber Welsh, director of Austin Kids First. "As a city we must look at the data and work together make educational opportunity accessible to everyone, regardless of school."

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.

"I applaud educators and students in the schools recognized for closing the achievement gap today by the Education Equality Index," said Eric Harslem of the KLE Foundation. "The Index confirms that the overwhelming majority of students from low-income families in Austin are in schools with large or massive achievement gaps. And, with only 5.5 percent of students from low-income families obtaining a college degree, there is an immediate and urgent need to grow high-quality schools for our communities."

"Quality education is a basic human right. Sadly, in this country, state, and city social, economic, and other disparities are based on our history of inequitable access to quality education," said Austin Independent School District Board Member Ted Gordon. "Nevertheless, in Austin ISD Blue-ribbon schools like Blackshear, Hart, and Graham prove that a quality education can be equitably provided to low-income students of color."

The Education Equality Index also identifies the top 10 schools in Austin with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where a majority are from low-income families. Graham Elementary School and KIPP Austin Collegiate are two of those schools.

"Graham Elementary uses highly effective stop-gap literacy and numeracy resources that rapidly accelerate our students back to grade level causing the achievement gap to narrow," said Graham Elementary School Principal

Blaine A. Helwig. "As our children academically excel in school, I am constantly amazed at their latent academic talent, which results in educational equity today and transitions toward economic equity in the not so distant future."

"For over a decade, our teachers and staff at KIPP Austin public schools have been working to empower all of our students to lead lives full of choice and opportunity," said Steven Epstein, Executive Director of KIPP Austin Public Schools. "We are humbled to know that KIPP Austin Collegiate is among the many great schools here in Austin that are changing lives for our city's students and families."

**Key findings from the Education Equality Index include:**

- Austin earns an EEI score of 47.1, indicating the city is home to the 17<sup>th</sup> smallest achievement gap in the nation of 100 major U.S. cities for which data is available.
- 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' achievement gap is relatively small, the state's achievement gap has widened 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.
- Four of 10 students from low-income families in Austin attend schools that are closing the achievement gap.

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

- Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders
- Blackshear Elementary School
- Dawson Elementary School
- Graham Elementary School
- Hart Elementary School
- Joslin Elementary School
- KIPP Austin Collegiate
- Ortega Elementary School
- Reilly Elementary School
- St. Elmo Elementary School

As detailed in the EEI, there are hundreds of schools across the nation where students from low-income families 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](http://www.GreatSchools.org) 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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