

Did You Know

The Cumberland County Schools District was Named a Finalist for the 2013 Broad Prize

October 2013

Cumberland County Schools (CCS) was named one of four finalists for the 2013 *Broad Prize for Urban Education* by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. Each year, The Broad Foundation recognizes school districts that make the greatest gains in student achievement among low income students and students of color, and **CCS was recognized for having one of the country's most impressive improvement trajectories over the past four years.**

As noted by the Broad Foundation, the CCS growth rate is a continuing trend rather than a temporary increase. The CCS graduation rate has been steadily increasing from 73.2 percent in 2009 to 81.7 percent in 2012. In addition, Howard Health and Life Science High School and Cross Creek Early College High School, both with 100 percent graduation rates, were recently recognized by State Superintendent June Atkinson as two of 46 high schools with the highest graduation rates in North Carolina.

Student growth rates on end-of-grade reading and math composite scores are particularly notable. The CCS composite score average for district high schools in 2011-2012 was 82 percent, up from 66.9 percent in 2008-2009. Ninety-two percent of all district schools in the 2011-2012 school year met or exceeded growth goals. Sixty-seven percent of district schools achieved "high growth," meaning within those schools, 60% of students or more met their growth expectations.

The award committee identified five central factors that led to CCS's results:

- 1) A unified focus on student growth;
- 2) A strong and visionary superintendent;
- 3) Targeted support for teachers;
- 4) The widespread use of performance data; and
- 5) Innovative implementation of classroom technology.

CCS's success is attributed to the strong leadership and strategic vision of Superintendent Dr. Frank Till Jr. Till, the former superintendent of Broward County Schools (FL) focuses students, staff, faculty, and parents on the principles of "True North"— his belief that all stakeholders have a vital role in student achievement. The "True North" philosophy is evidenced in teacher and student practices. Coaching and mentoring play a central role in teacher development, by strengthening practice and building a professional community among educators. Every new or struggling teacher receives intensive mentoring, and teachers in high-need schools are mentored for three years. The teachers hold one another accountable, investing in the success of each student in their school – not just in his or her classroom.



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Like other forward-thinking districts, CCS uses technology and performance data to pinpoint individual student learning needs. Using \$8 million rewarded through a federal Race to the Top grant, CCS modernized classroom technology and Internet access to promote individualized learning. The capability to personalize instruction allows teachers to achieve growth by targeting each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Due to visionary leadership, support for teachers, and the innovative use of technology, CCS is reminding all districts that "True North" is the direction to student growth.

For more information about CCS click [here](#).

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