

# HOW SCHOOL-REFORM FRIENDLY ARE AMERICA'S BIG CITIES?

## Survey of Local Respondents

This survey is part of a study conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in collaboration with the Education Policy Studies Division of the American Enterprise Institute.

The purpose of the study is to answer this question:

How receptive are America's major cities to reform-minded education entrepreneurs, including but not limited to operators of high-quality new schools (especially charter schools) and developers of "tools" that enhance school functioning?

*The study will rate the nation's largest cities (and a handful of others) on how hospitable they are to education innovators. It will provide advice to mayors, school boards, civic and business leaders, philanthropists, and others who want to make their own communities more edu-innovation friendly.*

You have received this survey because a member of a national-level education organization (e.g., Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, etc.) identified you as knowledgeable about these issues in your community. The survey covers the following broad topics as they relate to educational innovation: district culture and practices, availability of funding, quality control, and the political/business environment.

Your input is vital in helping us understand how these factors hinder or enhance innovation at the local level. **The survey should take no longer than 15-20 minutes to complete and results will be treated as confidential. There will be no reporting of individual responses.** We'll be happy to share the final report with you upon its release (tentatively scheduled for spring 2010).

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Stafford Palmieri at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute at 202-223-5452 or [spalmieri@edexcellence.net](mailto:spalmieri@edexcellence.net)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**



# LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS SURVEY *(administered online)*

**Directions:** You may be unable to answer every question and should respond “Don’t know” where applicable. Please mark one response for each line. You will not be able to save your work and return to it later, so please set aside roughly 15-20 minutes to complete the survey in a single session.

**Please respond for the city in which you currently work or have the most experience. In some cases, you’ll be asked to respond about the primary district rather than the city itself. We have indicated which district is the “primary school district” for your city next to the city’s name.**

Albany - City School District of Albany  
Austin - Austin Independent School District  
Baltimore - Baltimore City Public Schools  
Boston - Boston School District  
Charlotte - Charlotte-Mecklenberg Schools  
Chicago - Chicago Public Schools  
Columbus - Columbus City Schools  
Dallas - Dallas Independent School District  
Denver - Denver Public Schools  
Detroit - Detroit Public Schools  
El Paso - El Paso Independent School District  
Fort Worth - Fort Worth Independent School District  
Gary - Gary Community School Corporation  
Houston - Houston Independent School District  
Indianapolis - Indianapolis Public Schools  
Jacksonville - Duval County Public Schools  
Los Angeles - Los Angeles Unified School District  
Memphis - Memphis City Schools  
Milwaukee - Milwaukee Public Schools  
New Orleans - Recovery School District  
New York - New York City Public Schools  
Newark - Newark Public Schools  
Philadelphia - Philadelphia City School District  
Phoenix – Mesa Public Schools  
San Antonio - San Antonio Independent School District  
San Diego - San Diego Unified School District  
San Francisco - San Francisco Unified School District  
San Jose - San Jose Unified School District  
Seattle - Seattle Public Schools  
Washington - District of Columbia Public Schools

## Background

Which of the following do you consider yourself more involved with or knowledgeable about?

Charter schools.....	1
District schools.....	2
Philanthropy.....	3
Educator recruitment and preparation.....	4
Educational tools, programs, and other services (e.g., curriculum, instruction, data, etc.).....	5

Other, Please specify:

## I. District Culture and Practices

For the city/district you indicated previously, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about district culture and practices?

This district has a culture that rewards smart problem-solvers, not only employees who have put in their time or have paper credentials.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

District leadership has a coherent vision for change and is disciplined about pursuing philanthropic/private funding to support that vision.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

In this district, the teachers' union is usually able to block or weaken reforms, innovations, and entrepreneurial ventures that it opposes.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The district uses the information that it collects in order to make real-time adjustments in practice or policy along the way.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The district is attentive to making tools (e.g., hand-held devices, online instructional software programs, etc.) easy to use for its teachers and administrators.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The district has slack district hiring routines or slow hiring cycles that serve to keep alternatively-trained teachers out of classrooms.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The district generally abides by a “last hired, first fired” policy when contemplating teacher removal.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The procurement office in the district is well managed and responsive.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The district is proactive about hiring external providers to deliver “supplemental education services,” (e.g., tutoring) under the No Child Left Behind act.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

District leaders communicate a sense of urgency about raising achievement and improving schools.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

In general, district leaders have the political support they need to make things happen.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

In general, the superintendent and senior leadership in this district make bold decisions and push to innovate and excel.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

To my knowledge, this district utilizes metrics beyond those of the state-assessment system (e.g., cost analyses; user-satisfaction surveys; Baldrige criteria) to gauge the quality of the following services:

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Tutoring providers (i.e., those used to provide “supplemental education services” under NCLB)	1	2	3
Special education services	1	2	3
Education-based technology and tools	1	2	3

The metrics beyond those of the state assessment system are able to distinguish between effective and ineffective services and programs when it comes to:

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Tutoring providers (i.e., those used to provide “supplemental education services” under NCLB)	1	2	3
Special education services	1	2	3
Education-based technology and tools	1	2	3

## II. Availability of Funding

For the district about which you’re most knowledgeable, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about funding availability?

Philanthropists and/or philanthropic organizations have been a negative influence in this district because they have promoted initiatives that conflict with district priorities.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The level of charter school per-pupil funding is 75% or more of district school per-pupil funding.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

The district spends its own money on nontraditional educational tools and programs.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

Nontraditional reforms (e.g., charter schools, alternative teaching routes, or smart applications of technology) get their fair share of philanthropic dollars available in this city.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

It is relatively easy for current or future charter school operators to obtain facilities funding.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

There is at least one local philanthropy that invests in, or contributes to, one or more of these reforms: charter schools; performance-based pay; alternative teaching routes.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

Please provide the organization's name. If there is more than one, list the one that provides the most funding annually to these reforms (charter schools, performance-based pay, and alternative teaching routes) in this city.

On average, how much do you estimate that this organization contributes to K-12 education per year in this city?

1	Less than \$100,000
2	\$100,000-\$499,000
3	\$500,000-\$999,000
4	\$1 million-\$5 million
5	More than \$5 million
6	Don't know

At least one major national foundation is helping to support at least one of the following in this city: charter schools; performance-based pay; alternative teaching routes.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

Which national foundation is it? If there is more than one, choose the one that gives the most money annually to these reforms (charter schools, performance-based pay, and alternative certification routes) in this city.

1	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
2	W.K. Kellogg Foundation
3	Walton Family Foundation
4	Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation
5	Carnegie Corporation of New York
6	The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
7	Other

On average, how much do you estimate that this organization contributes to K-12 education per year in this city?

1	Less than \$100,000
2	\$100,000-\$499,000
3	\$500,000-\$999,000
4	\$1 million-\$5 million
5	More than \$5 million
6	Don't know

Public funding (from local, state, or federal sources) is available for charter school facilities.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

### III. Quality Control

There is at least one charter-school support organization in this city (i.e., an entity that provides technical assistance for and/or lobbies on behalf of charter schools).

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

If yes, please name the charter-school support organization operating in this city:

Note: Specific organizations will not be referenced in the report

To my knowledge, this charter support organization:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
A. Emphasizes quality when assisting new or prospective charters	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Seeks to improve low-performing charters	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Encourages shutting down persistently low-performing charters	1	2	3	4	5	6

Name the authorizer that authorizes the most charter schools in the city.

Note: Specific organizations will not be referenced in the report

To my knowledge, this charter authorizer:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
A. Is selective about which charters it approves	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Seeks to improve low-performing charter schools	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Intervenes in and/or shuts down persistently low-performing charter schools	1	2	3	4	5	6

Since its inception, this authorizer has proactively closed down or not renewed the contract of one or more schools.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

If yes, how many schools has this authorizer shut down?

1	One
2	2-5
3	More than 5

This city has one or more non-district charter school authorizers.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

## IV. Political/Business Environment

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

For the most part, the business and philanthropic community in this city are willing to exert political influence to advance bold education reforms.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

For the most part, the mayor in this city is willing to exert political influence to advance bold education reforms.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4	5	6

There is an entity or individual inside the district that helps nontraditional providers\* with one or more of the following: finances, facilities, or regulatory guidelines.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

There is an entity or individual outside the district that helps nontraditional providers\* with one or more of the following: finances, facilities, or regulatory guidelines.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

There is an organization that advocates for reform at the state or local level on behalf of nontraditional providers\* (e.g., Advance Illinois, ConnCAN, etc).

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

The mayor has a “point person” to assist nontraditional providers.\*

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3

\* By “nontraditional providers” we mean those who provide alternative sources of human capital, goods and services, and education options such as charter schools.

Each of the following stakeholders is supportive of charter schools.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
A. District superintendent	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Local philanthropists	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Local media (editorial voice)	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. Local business community	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. Teachers union	1	2	3	4	5	6

Each of the following stakeholders is supportive of performance-based pay.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
A. District superintendent	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Local philanthropists	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Local media (editorial voice)	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. Local business community	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. Teachers union	1	2	3	4	5	6

Each of the following stakeholders is supportive of alternative teaching routes.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
A. District superintendent	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Local philanthropists	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Local media (editorial voice)	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. Local business community	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. Teachers union	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Please press “submit” below to complete the survey.