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Supreme Court Ruling Reflected in Council Legal Arguments

The U.S. Supreme Court last month ruled in a unanimous decision that reaffirmed special-education precedent, clarifying the legal standard federal courts must apply in evaluating individual education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* in Colorado, the high court ruled that, under IDEA, IEPs for students with disabilities should be “reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.”



The court’s decision largely rejected arguments for the application of a more stringent legal standard, as urged by both the petitioners in the

case and the U.S. government.

The ruling and discussion in the opinion significantly reflected the legal arguments set forth in an *amicus curiae* brief presented to the Supreme Court by the Council of the Great City Schools.

“We are pleased the Supreme Court appears to have heard the arguments we raised and been sensitive to the concerns of urban school districts,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly in a press statement. “This ruling is workable and will encourage our districts to continue

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Education Secretary, Civil Rights Official Address Big-City School Leaders



U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos advocates giving parents the right to choose their children’s education.

Betsy DeVos became the 11th U.S. secretary of education on Feb. 7, and in her first address to urban educators assembled in Washington, D.C., at the Council of the Great City Schools’ recent Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, she assured them that she supports public schools.

“I’ve said this before, and it bears repeating: I support great public schools,” said DeVos, “and I support great public school teachers—because I support students—all students.”

The secretary also announced her support of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), and noted that it was passed by Congress in a bipartisan fashion with the goal of rolling back what she considers intrusive involvement of the federal government in decisions that she believes should be made at the state and local levels.

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Urban Students Become Global Scholars

Students 10 to 13 years old in a dozen big-city school districts nationwide interact with their international peers in a worldwide online learning program aimed to create a new generation of global citizens.

Nearly 10,500 students, in 46 cities, in 25 countries currently participate in cross-cultural learning opportunities through Global Scholars, a Bloomberg Philanthropies program operated by Global Cities, Inc., a non-profit organization.

The program gives the youths an opportunity to increase global competency skills and engage in collective problem-solving about common issues they may face in the future. Students communicate peer-to-peer in a digital classroom -- an e-classroom.

Of the nation’s urban school districts participating in the Global Scholars program, the New York City public school sys-

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Several Urban Districts Win First ‘Great Teachers’ Honor

Eight public-school systems last month won *Great Districts for Great Teachers* recognition, the first-ever honor presented by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ).

The winners -- Boston Public Schools, Florida’s Broward County Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools, Georgia’s Gwinnett County Public Schools, New York City Department of Education, Florida’s Pinel-

las County Schools and Pittsburgh Public Schools – received recognition for “exceptional programs and policies on recruiting, encouraging, supporting and retaining great teachers.”

“We hope these winners will inspire other districts in their own transformations so that sometime soon, all districts will be great districts where great people want to work,” said Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ, in a press release.

The eight winners excelled in five key areas: compensation, professional support, effective management and operations, career and leadership opportunities, and support services for students.

Winners were chosen after a rigorous 18-month evaluation process, which included analysis of data and surveying and interviewing teachers. NCTQ verified finalists through focus groups with teachers and interviews with district leaders in each school district.



Winning school-district participants at the recent event announcing the “Great Districts for Great Teachers” included, left to right, Boston’s Emily Qazilbash, Pittsburgh’s Anthony Anderson, District of Columbia’s Jason Kamras and Denver’s Deborah Hearty.

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San Francisco Selects New Superintendent; Jackson Maintains Interim Chief



Vincent Matthews

Vincent Matthews is a San Francisco native, a graduate of the San Francisco Unified School District and was a teacher and principal at two district elementary schools.

And he will now lead the 57,000-student school district as its next superintendent.

Matthews was recently named head of the San Francisco school system, California's sixth largest, succeeding interim leader Myong Leigh.

Matthews currently serves the California Department of Education as the state-appointed superintendent of the Inglewood Unified School District. Prior to serving in Inglewood, he was the superintendent of California's San Jose Unified School District. Under his leadership, academic achievement increased and the achievement gap narrowed between Hispanic and white students.

Matthews has also held positions as a state-appointed superintendent for California's Oakland Unified School District and as an area superintendent for San Diego City Schools.

"...Having been a student in the district, I believe I owe so much to the staff mem-

bers, educators and caring adults who delivered a high-quality, rigorous education to me," said Matthews in a news statement. "I look forward to working with our current staff to provide each and every student the quality instruction and equitable support required to thrive in the 21st century."

Leader in Jackson



Freddrick Murray

Freddrick Murray has been serving as the interim leader of Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools since this past November. He was named interim after the board of trustees chose him to lead the district while they conducted a nationwide search for a successor to Cedrick Gray, who resigned from the district he had led since 2012.

But the search for a new superintendent to lead the 28,000-student school system has been halted, with the board recently voting to keep Murray as interim superintendent through the 2017-2018 school year.

Murray was the chief academic officer for the district's high schools and has previously served as a principal on the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Great Teachers continued from page 2

"Providing high-quality instruction is at the center of everything we do, and that's exactly why we have emphasized teacher development, leadership and collaboration," said New York City Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña. "We are honored to be recognized as a *Great District for Great Teachers*, and we are also seeing results of our work across multiple measures – record-high graduation and college enrollment rates, record-low dropout rates, and

strong improvements in state test scores."

After the Denver Public Schools won the honor, Superintendent Tom Boasberg said, "The quality of our teachers is the single most important factor in the success that we have for our kids. We are especially pleased that this award recognizes our path-breaking Teacher Leadership & Collaboration model that provides significantly more coaching and instructional supports for our teachers...."

Urban School Leaders Honored for Boosting Hispanic Achievement



Michael Hinojosa

Michael Hinojosa, the superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, and Barbara Jenkins, the superintendent of Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., were recently recognized by the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS).

Hinojosa was selected as the Latino Superintendent of the Year, and Jenkins was chosen as the Hispanic-Serving School District Superintendent of the Year.



Barbara Jenkins

The superintendents will receive their awards at ALAS' third annual Leaders in Education Awards Gala in Washington, D.C. This event recognizes the best practices in public education serving Hispanic communities.

Supreme Court continued from page 1

their important work to develop education programs for all students that are designed to help them make educational progress."

The friend-of-the-court brief was authored by the Council and a team of attorneys from the Husch Blackwell law firm's education group led by John W. Borkowski.

"While numerous commentators are suggesting that this decision heightens the legal standard for assessing IEPs, the high court's actual holding is more properly seen as a reaffirmation and clarification of long-standing precedent," said Borkowski. "This decision should not be a problem for any school district that is implementing an appropriate IEP process."

Education Secretary *continued from page 1*

She stated that the law ensures transparency and accountability provisions for all schools and provides the latitude to do what's best for children while preserving important civil rights protections for students from economically disadvantaged families as well as students with disabilities and English language learners.

According to DeVos, too often in the past the U.S. Department of Education has gone outside of its established authority and created roadblocks, wittingly or unwittingly, for parents and educators alike.

"Under this Administration, we will break this habit," she declared and said that no school district should feel like the department is hampering its ability to improve the learning environment of students.

Parents Know Best

DeVos told urban school leaders that her more than three decades of involvement in education have led her to some clear conclusions when it comes to education.

"The most important is this simple fact: parents know what is best for their children... and very often, they are guided by their kids themselves," said DeVos. She stressed that parents know better than any politician or administrator the unique needs of their children.

The nation's top education official also believes that when parents are empowered to take charge of their children's education and when they have quality options, the outcome is better results for students.

"Parents make plenty of other decisions for their children—what they eat, what they wear, what they do and where they go—outside of school," said DeVos. "Yet, in too many cities and states, parents are still denied the simple, but critical choice of what school their child attends."

DeVos said that when it comes to the education of a child, she is agnostic to the delivery system as long as that child is in an environment that meets his or her needs and the parents are satisfied.

"If a child is able to grow and flourish,



Catherine Lhamon, chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, addresses how school districts can protect the rights of students.

it shouldn't matter where they learn," said the education secretary, and that she trusts parents, teachers and school leaders to do what's right for the children they serve. "Those closest to the problem are most often the best-equipped to solve it."

Innovative Programs

DeVos is a strong proponent of celebrating out-of-the-box approaches that schools are taking to educate their students. She cited innovation schools in Indianapolis Public Schools, which are under the control of the school district but operate independently, which according to DeVos, makes them better attuned to the unique needs of their students.

The secretary also pointed to the Success Express program in Denver Public Schools, which provides transportation to children from underserved areas to schools in other regions of the city. And she recognized the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Project Lead the Way, which connects students with engineering businesses and organizations in the community.

She urged educators to continue to move power away from Washington, D.C., and into the hands of parents and state and local leaders, and reassured conferees that the Department of Education will fully support them in this effort.

"This flexibility, the freedom from overreaching mandates from Washington, is to empower you and state leaders to better serve kids," said DeVos. "Because together, we owe every child an equal opportunity to access a quality education, no matter their ZIP code or family income."

Protecting Civil Rights

Also addressing the conference was Catherine Lhamon, chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She acknowledged the progress made concerning student's civil rights in public schools and urged big-city school leaders to continue those efforts.

"Model what it means to stand up for other people," said Lhamon. She thanked Florida's Broward County Public Schools for their PROMISE program, which has been successful at safeguarding students from the schoolhouse to jailhouse pipeline through analyzing behavior, strengthening academic skills and engaging with the community.

Lhamon also recognized Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools for its work on behalf of transgender students. The school board unanimously accepted a new policy to make transgender students more comfortable at school.

Though she praised several other school districts for their contributions in protecting the rights of students, Lhamon stressed the reality that more needs to be done. "Now more than ever, you are what stands between your students and harm," she declared.

The civil rights official shared the details of a few cases where students were being neglected and unprotected by an educational institution. Many of these students were those with special needs, students who are English language learners and female students.

"We know from our numbers that we need to take care of our girls," said Lhamon. She pointed to a study by the American Association of University Women which found that 81 percent of students between grade 8 through grade 11 experienced sexual harassment.

Lhamon, the former assistant secretary for civil rights in the U.S. Department of Education, closed her speech by urging conferees to stay vigilant in ensuring urban students' civil rights. "I hope and ask that you do better for all your students," said Lhamon. "You're showing what civil engagement looks like."

Journalist Gives Perspective on Washington Politics

Eugene Robinson currently writes a twice-weekly column on politics and culture for *The Washington Post*, for which he received a Pulitzer Prize in 2009. In his three decades working for the *Post*, he has covered numerous issues in politics, but the one issue he doesn't have an answer for is fake news.

"A lot of people accept an alternate reality, an alternate set of facts," Robinson told big-city school leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., for the Council of the Great City Schools' recent Annual Legislative/Policy Conference. "When I was growing up, those were lies."

"Does [fake news] matter?" Robinson asked conferees. "I think it matters a lot that there is no longer an agreed set of facts or agreed upon sequence of historical events that we refer to before we take political positions."

Robinson has come to the conclusion that there is no easy way to counter fake news and the spread of misinformation because whatever one says in response can also be considered fake news.

But he says the country must push back against the misinformation in politics because the fight for the truth is needed in order for the country to be a strong democracy.

"I think you have to overwhelm with truth," said Robinson.

The First Amendment

A member of the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame, the veteran journalist strongly believes that the nation needs quality journalism.

"I can't tell you how many people around the country I meet who tell me they are subscribing to the *Post* or *New York Times*," said Robinson. "People want to support good journalism."

Robinson, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for his columns covering President Obama's 2008 election campaign, said the former president was often referred to as "no-drama Obama," while



Journalist Eugene Robinson discusses the need for quality journalism.

President Donald Trump's Administration might be described as beset by drama.

Robinson noted, "That is the new normal, that is what we are dealing with in Washington, and to tell you the truth, we are just exhausted."

But in the midst of all the drama with the most prominent newspapers in the country all weighing in with stories about the new Trump Administration, Robinson noticed something else.

"It was incredibly heartening to me that the First Amendment is alive and well," said Robinson.

An MSNBC contributor, he believes that the First Amendment is immune from the rhetorical chaos because the precedents are well set.

"Any court, conservative or liberal, will recognize the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution means what it says," said Robinson.

He believes the Trump Administration may be doing the press a favor because there's nothing like a slap in the face to bring one back to reality and that journalists need to continue to do good basic reporting to uncover the truth.

"I'm an optimistic person," said Robinson. "In the end, both the media and the First Amendment may well remain strengthened. I think we're going to come through all of this as a stronger nation."

Pittsburgh Teen Opens Arms To Immigrant, Refugee Students

After beginning her freshman year last fall at Pittsburgh's Allderdice High School, 15-year-old Peyton Klein noticed a classmate having problems communicating with her teacher.

She found out that her classmate's family had fled from war-torn Syria to the United States.

Klein's acquaintance with the 16-year-old refugee from Aleppo made her wonder how many other immigrant and refugee students in her school were having difficulty adjusting.

When she saw that there are many students in her school from other countries and speak different languages, it led her to launch a weekly after-school program called Global Minds to encourage cultural tolerance.

"There's all this stuff going on in the world, and I think it's so important that our ESL [English as a Second Language] students feel safe and comfortable and have the academic resources that they need to succeed," Klein said in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

The weekly after-school sessions attract some 25 to 50 students to engage in conversations to break cultural barriers, discussing international human rights and dispelling common stereotypes among other activities.



Peyton Klein, center, brings students together in Global Minds program she started.

Florida Congresswoman Focuses on Males of Color

When Frederica Wilson was an elementary school principal in Miami, she had lunch every week with a group of black boys who had discipline problems. In talking to them, she learned that they had no positive black male role models in their lives, so she called on every male friend and acquaintance she knew to visit them at the school.

Those visits resulted in Wilson creating the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project mentoring program, which since 1993 has awarded millions in college scholarships, and currently serves more than 8,000 males of color in Miami each year.

Wilson, who was elected to Congress in 2010 and represents the 24th district in Florida, spoke about the program at the recent Males of Color Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools.

She said that a lot of times when people think about mentoring, they only think about mentoring boys in high school. “But you have to plant that seed early, plant it in elementary through middle and high school,” said Wilson, “so little boys can get on the right track to manhood.”

The program pairs boys of color between the ages of 9-19 with successful professional adult volunteers, who provide advice, guidance and educational assistance. Mentors receive training through a partnership with a local university and the mentoring takes place before, during and after school.

5000 Role Models services 103 schools within Miami-Dade County Public Schools (35 elementary, 36 middle/K-8, and 32 high schools). And it has been designated as a district-sanctioned program by the Miami-Dade County school board.

More than 30 components constitute the program as it teaches young boys about healthy living, responsibility, respect and how to attain their future goals. In addition, the program has developed a writing curriculum to help boys with their writing skills and takes boys on field trips.

One of those field trips includes a visit to the local correctional facility for high



Rep. Frederica Wilson discusses her 5000 Role Models of Excellence mentoring program.

school students, where they talk to prisoners who advise them not to follow in their footsteps. The prisoners receive training and there is actually a waiting list for them to participate. “It’s a game changer,” said Wilson. “Children say when they leave the prison, it’s life changing.”

The congresswoman, who serves on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, says the mentoring program has made a huge difference with boys becoming leaders in their schools as well as improving their test scores.

“5000 Role Models is tested, we have goals that we meet,” said Wilson. “The boys have the brains to be anything they want; they just need the guidance.”

The mentoring initiative has been so successful that it has expanded to schools in Florida’s Duval County Public Schools and Pinellas County Schools.

During her speech, the congresswoman cited statistics that in 2015 the Florida Department of Corrections spent \$19,577 to house a prisoner, but the state Department of Education spent only \$7,105 to teach a student.

According to Wilson, it takes only about 40 cents a day per child to run the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. The program is funded with Title I and Title IV funds as well as donations.

“5000 Role Models should be in every school district,” said Wilson.

Book Published On School-University Partnerships in Cities

A new book has been published focusing on urban school-university partnerships recognized by the Council of the Great City Schools’ Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Impact Award.

Every year, the organization and the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, an affiliate group of deans working with urban school leaders, honor a big-city school district’s collaborative work with a college or university in memory of Schwartz, the former liaison between the two groups.

The book, *Working Together: Enhancing Urban Educator Quality through School-University Partnerships*, provides illustrations of partnerships that blend practitioner and researcher efforts to help improve teaching and learning.

“This was a collective effort to document the work of our urban school-university partnerships that won the Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Impact Award,” says Interim Dean Deborah Shanley of Lehman College-CUNY’s School of Education and one of the book’s editors. “The significance is how we captured the process that each partnership used to develop mutual trust, a shared vision for educator preparation programs...”

The book is divided into three sections – teacher candidate preparation, teacher professional development and principal development. One of the partnerships, Leaders for Tomorrow between North Carolina’s Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Winthrop University, is designed to prepare school principals and assistant principals for the city-county school system.

“I think the book would be of interest to anyone in {Council} membership districts and on our university campuses who are responsible for creating and maintaining partnerships,” stresses Dean Shanley, who leads the deans group.

Working Together can be found at www.infoagepub.com.

Community Schools Take Off in Buffalo, Gaining Attention



Kriner Cash

for the entire community.

The initiative has taken off with nearly 15,000 people thus far attending programs at the Community Schools since the launch. And the district also opened Parent Centers in four of these schools that help parents and guardians support their children in school and beyond through research materials, workshops, advocacy and Internet access to online resources.

The effort, under the district's comprehensive reform agenda, the *New Education Bargain with Students and Parents*, keeps the schools open beyond normal school hours to offer free academic, cultural, social and health & wellness programs, and nutritious meals during select evenings and Saturday mornings.

"This eagerly awaited plan is now a reality, and we want the community to know that the Strong Community Schools are here and they are open to every resident of the City of Buffalo, regardless of whether they have a student enrolled in a Buffalo public school," said Superintendent Cash. "When we launched the Community Schools initiative, our goal was to dramatically improve student learning, enrich the curricula, increase parent engagement, and build stronger, healthier communities."

Dozens of local organizations have adopted Community Schools and offered funding, expertise, and in-kind services and programs.

"We have enjoyed tremendous early success thanks to the many community partners who have joined us in this critically important work," added Cash. "Our

commitment is only as strong as the partnerships that allow us to provide much needed opportunity and resources to these Community Schools, strategically selected in our most impoverished zip codes. We will continue to invest in our schools, share our results, and encourage every child, every parent, and every citizen to join us."

Joined by officials from the local education, business, nonprofit, faith-based, city and county community, Superintendent Cash recently announced that 114,500 City of Buffalo residences will receive a Strong Community Schools poster in their mailbox to boost awareness.



Buffalo Public Schools strategically placed billboards around the city to make citizens aware of the Community Schools.

Buffalo Public School District and its incredible partners. I applaud them for their efforts and I look forward to celebrating the successes of our children and our families."

Mayor Byron Brown said, "I'm pleased to see the Buffalo Public Schools open these 13 schools on evenings and weekends, as well as creating the four Parent Centers. The educational and recreational offerings will benefit Buffalo residents of all ages. I commend Dr. Kriner Cash for extending the reach of schools to the community-at-large."

New York State Senator Timothy Kennedy said, "The creation of Community Schools is an investment not only in our children, but in our entire community. Through this incredible initiative, students and families will now have new resources at their fingertips, and educators will be able to guide their kids towards new opportunity."

Learn about the free evening and Saturday programs offered through the Community Schools and Parent Centers at www.BPSCommunitySchools.org.

City, State Support

Board of Education President Barbara Nevergold said, "I have long been a proponent of afterschool programs and anything that brings parent involvement to our schools. Community Schools and Parent Centers, with evening and Saturday hours, workshops and supports for our families and communities has proven to be a sure way to get families and the community together."

New York State Assembly member Crystal Peoples-Stokes, an ardent supporter of the community school strategy, calls it a proven approach. "The direct mail campaign targeting City of Buffalo residents will ensure all families are made aware of the opportunities provided to them by the

Two Urban COOs Win Council Award

Fran Burns, the chief operating officer for the School District of Philadelphia, and Christopher Farkas, the chief operating officer for Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, received the Distinguished Service Award from the Council of the Great City Schools at its recent Chief Operating Officers Conference in New Orleans.

The award honors business officials who exemplify leadership, innovation, commitment and professionalism in urban education.

CNN Correspondent Van Jones to Address Council



Van Jones

CNN political correspondent Van Jones will address urban-school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools' 61st Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 18-22, in Cleveland.

A Yale-educated attorney, Jones is also a civil-rights leader and former Obama White House green-jobs adviser. He is the

founder and president of Dream Corps, a platform for world-changing initiatives to empower society's most vulnerable.

Jones has written two *New York Times* bestsellers: *The Green Collar Economy*, considered the definitive book on green jobs, and *Rebuild the Dream*, called a roadmap for progressives.

Under the banner "Advancing the State of Urban Education," the Council conference will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Cleveland.

Dallas District Expands Number of Collegiate Academies

A ground-breaking initiative to benefit students in the Dallas Independent School District is being expanded.

The district is adding 10 new collegiate academies next school year. They will join the eight already operating, which were launched in the fall of this current school year.

The academies are the result of a partnership between the Dallas school district and Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD). Enrolled students can earn up to 60 hours of transferrable college credit or an associate's degree, while simultaneously earning a high school diploma. All college tuition fees are waived, and free transportation from high school campuses to community college campuses are provided for the students.

The new academies will be supported by 24 industry partners in Dallas. These local businesses will provide valuable mentorships, job interviews, site visits, and internship opportunities.

The academic experience and career exposure the collegiate academies offer has led to an increase in student interest. According to district officials, the academies received more than 4,800 applications for about half that many spots during the recent application period.

"We owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to these industry partners who have stepped up to provide real-world experience for our students," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa at a recent ceremony announcing the expansion of collegiate academies.

The new academies, scheduled to open next year, include the Hillcrest Collegiate Academy, focusing on electrical engineering and whose industry partners include Texas Instruments. And North Dallas Collegiate Academy will focus on software programming and health information technology and will partner with Southwest Airlines.



Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa joins students at a ceremony announcing the expansion of the district's collegiate academies.

Top Magnet Schools Named

The top magnet schools in the nation were recently named and Miami-Dade County Public Schools dominated the list, with the most schools awarded this year than any other district.

The Magnet Schools of America (MSA) honored 20 schools in Miami with the Magnet School of Excellence Merit Award, the highest designation a magnet school can earn.

Schools received the award based on their commitment to high academic standards, curriculum innovation, successful diversity efforts, specialized teaching staffs and parent/community involvement.

In addition to Miami-Dade, several other urban school districts received Excellence Awards including: North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (9); Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas (9); and Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando (6); and Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa (6).

Houston Independent School District and the Los Angeles Unified School District had two schools honored, while Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale had one.

The schools are now eligible to receive monetary prizes and to be selected as the nation's top Elementary, Secondary, or New & Emerging Magnet school at MSA's 35th National Conference in Los Angeles later this month.

One school will also receive \$5,000 and the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award, the most prestigious award offered by MSA.

All awardees are chosen from a panel of educators who judge all submitted applications from each individual school.

"These schools are making a lasting, positive impact on the lives of children," said Todd Mann, MSA executive director. They are preparing them for the challenges of the future by providing them with unique learning experiences...."

Newspaper Taps Two Urban Educators As 'Leaders to Learn From'

What does a chief equity officer in Louisville and a chief of schools in Memphis have in common?

They both were among 14 school-district leaders nationwide tapped by *Education Week* in its fifth annual "Leaders to Learn From" special report.

The 2017 leaders were recognized by the newspaper's editors from more than 750 nominees submitted by readers, journalists, school administrator groups and experts in elementary and secondary education.

"We are turning the spotlight on these creative and inspiring leaders who are proving that bold and creative approaches to improving student achievement are succeeding in public school systems around the United States," said Lesli Maxwell, an assistant managing editor at *Education Week*, who led the "Leaders to Learn From" project.



John Marshall

The newspaper profiled urban-school leader John D. Marshall, chief equity officer of Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools, as "A Strong Voice for Equity in Louisville,"

who "advocates for students of color, those who are homeless, and the disadvantaged in the 101,000-student district.

"He feels empowered to ask for – even demand – what those students need," says the *Education Week* article in the special report.

"This recognition is really a reflection of the tremendous work undertaken by my entire department to continually promote diversity and equity in our school system, and I'm very proud to accept it on their behalf," Marshall said in a district news release.

The newspaper also headlined urban educator Sharon Griffin, chief of schools in Tennessee's Shelby County Schools in Memphis, as having "A Passion for Sav-



Sharon Griffin

ing Schools on the Brink."

She leads the district's Innovation Zone, helping to improve low-performing schools. "Several of the district's iZone schools now outper-

form the district's schools that are run by the state," says the *Education Week* article.

"With the right resources, the whole premise was to create a school where principals have empowerment, teachers have the support they need and kids' needs are addressed first," says Griffin in the special report, who oversees 21 iZone schools.

For more information on the 2017 "Leaders to Learn From," access <http://leaders.edweek.org>.

National Principal Supervisors Summit To Be Held

The Council of the Great City Schools and Blackboard, Inc. will sponsor the second National Summit for Principal Supervisors, May 17-19, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Superintendents and other district and school leaders from urban school districts across the nation are expected to converge to discuss current trends in educational leadership around the theme "Change, Develop, Lead."

Hosted by Florida's Broward County Public Schools, the two-day summit will include a superintendents' roundtable, guest speakers and sessions on topics considered essential to the professional development of leaders who provide supervision to school principals.

For more information on the summit, visit www.principalsummit.com or call 754-321-3636.

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tem has the most schools – with students in 19 middle schools in e-classrooms.

"Global Scholars provides our students with an innovative approach to teaching and learning, turning classroom experiences into global experiences as they tackle relevant problems with peers from across the globe," said Deputy Chancellor Phil Weinberg of the New York City Department of Education in a news release. "This prepares young people to contribute to the city and the world as critical thinkers, problem solvers and collaborators."

Other U.S. big-city school districts in the Global Scholars program include Boston (7 schools), Buffalo (4 schools), Florida's Broward County in Fort Lauderdale (16 schools) and Duval County in Jacksonville (4 schools), Miami-Dade County (7 schools), and some five others with one school, according to Global Cities, Inc.

Global Scholars enrollment has risen from 333 students in the 2013-14 school year to nearly 10,500 today.

Each year, Global Scholars provides a new curriculum, and runs from September through June. A school in the United States will interact with schools from eight other cities around the world. And teachers benefit from the program as well, participating in professional development videoconferences to prepare them to work with colleagues around the world.

Enrollment is now open for the upcoming 2017-18 school year. Deadline to apply is June 15. Interested school district leaders can email globalscholars@globalcities.org to learn more. There is no fee to schools.



Global Scholars in New York City participate in a Skype chat with students in Recife, Brazil.

Federal Funding Uncertainties Plague the Upcoming School Year

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The United States Congress has one primary job each year, i.e., to pass annual appropriations bills. Unfortunately, both the prior 114th Congress and the current 115th Congress have failed to perform this one key legislative task.

Now seven months into the new federal fiscal year (FY 2017), Congress has resorted to using short-term appropriations bills or continuing resolutions to keep the federal government open for business, but which do not provide year-long funding levels for the federal agencies and the programs they run.

To be sure, school districts begin their annual budgeting process at the start of each calendar year for the upcoming school year. School principals typically receive their budget allocations from their school district in early spring, so programs can be initiated or extended and staff can be hired or retained.

The lack of congressional action on this year's annual funding bill leaves schools without a legitimate way of estimating their key federal funding for the school year starting in August or September. This is particularly true for the \$15 billion Title I program for disadvantaged students, which serves some 55 percent of the nation's public schools.

Traditionally, the U.S. Department of Education provides estimated Title I allocations for each school district in the nation by late February or early March. These estimated local-level allocations are particularly critical for school district budgeting purposes, since annual poverty updates can skew school district funding levels by large percentages from year to year.



In fact, many large urban school districts have seen double digit decreases in their poverty counts, which could substantially lower their Title I funding levels for the upcoming 2017-18 school year. Yet, the Education Department has not yet provided any projections to states or school districts.

We understand that the final congressional appropriations levels have not yet been set, but the Education Department is fully capable of calculating Title I estimates at either current funding levels or proposed House or Senate appropriations levels from last summer.

On top of this issue, the recently enacted *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) will increase state-level set-asides that will be taken off-the-top of local Title I allocations, further reducing allotments for the upcoming school year. The state school improvement set-aside was increased from 4 percent to 7 percent (an additional \$450 million in state Title I funds).

In addition, ESSA authorized a new optional 3 percent state-level set-aside for “direct student services” (or yet another \$450 million in potential state reservations of Title I funds).

While we understand that a new Congress and new Administration need time to get their “sea legs,” we don’t understand why Congress can’t get its critical appropriations business done. And we don’t understand why the Department of Education has not provided an estimate (based on one or more of the above options) of how much federal funding school districts might have to work with in the first year of ESSA implementation beginning July 1.

Pictorial of 2017 Legislative Conference



U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is greeted by members of the Council of the Great City Schools leadership, Chair-elect Darienne Driver and Secretary-Treasurer Larry Feldman.



Council Chair Felton Williams introduces Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.



Anchorage Schools Superintendent Deena Bishop attends a legislative briefing.



El Paso Schools Superintendent Juan Cabrera, left, and Sacramento Schools Superintendent José Banda listen intently during a conference session.



Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite poses a question to journalist Eugene Robinson.

Photos by Alex Jones



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Grant Program Aids Cincinnati Students

Graduates of Cincinnati Public Schools can now receive financial help to attend Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, as a result of the Be Great High School Grant program.

Students from economically disadvantaged families will be able to receive up to \$1,000 for tuition and \$1,000 for books to help fill gaps beyond their financial aid.

The program is an effort to make college possible for many Cincinnati students who might not otherwise be able to attain a degree.

Any student graduating from a high school in the Cincinnati school district, who qualifies for a federal Pell Grant and who attends Cincinnati State full time, will be eligible for a grant.

The grant program is supported by the Cincinnati State Foundation and will begin in the 2017-2018 academic year.

"We're very excited about this new college grant opportunity for our students," said Cincinnati Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan.

Former Miami-Dade School Board Member Remembered

Betsy Kaplan, a former Miami-Dade County school board member, reportedly died at age 90 on Feb. 27 from cancer.

She served on the school board for 16 years until 2004, and was known as "the mother of public arts education" for her strong advocacy of the arts.

According to the *Miami Herald*, she was instrumental in the development of arts education programs at schools such as New World School of the Arts and the Design and Architecture High School.

Larry Feldman, current chair of the school board, recalled that Kaplan was a force to be reckoned with. "She believed the school should be the lighthouse of the community and that the arts were an integral part of the curriculum," said Feldman. "As a school board member, she never faltered in doing what was right... [she] left a legacy that makes all school board members proud; she will be missed."

Kaplan was a graduate of the Miami school system and a fourth-grade teacher at a district elementary school.