



- New Leader in L.A., p.3
- New School Calendar, p.5
- Newark Going Solar, p.6

## Denver Schools Reaching Hispanics Through Radio

Denver Public Schools' Spanish-speaking radio show called *Educa* has captured national attention.

The program tops the list of "Best City Policies of 2010," an honor bestowed on cities with the smartest policies by the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, a non-partisan, non-profit think tank promoting progressive ideas based in New York City.

Every year the institute releases a list of the 10 "best" and "worst" city policies.

"Denver Sparks Parental Involvement En Espanol" is how the institute describes the school system's initiative to utilize radio to reach the city's large Hispanic population, especially parents who don't speak English.

"Through an hour-long weekly pro-

**Reaching Hispanics** continued on page 3



Alex Sanchez, who heads the school system's Multicultural Outreach Office, broadcasts to Denver's Spanish-speaking community.

## U.S. Legislation, Policy to Be Addressed



Reauthorization of the nation's Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) will be among the major topics to be addressed at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 19-22, in the nation's capital.

Urban school leaders will have an opportunity to hear from legislators, congressional staff and the U.S. secretary of education at Washington's landmark Mayflower Renaissance Hotel, site of the conference.

Discussions will also center on the final federal appropriations for the 2011 fiscal year; President Obama's budget proposal for the next fiscal year; and education priorities in the 112th Congress.

Conference highlights are on page 7. To register, access <http://www.cgcs.org/conferences/legislative.aspx>.

## USA TODAY and Council Plan Education Forum

Urban educators, business leaders and news executives will converge March 18 at *USA TODAY* in a *Unite to Make a Difference* Education Forum aimed at working together to improve education in America.

"The Nation's Newspaper" is hosting the forum in cooperation with the Council of the Great City Schools, which will hold its Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 19-22, in the nation's capital.

The pre-conference event at *USA TODAY* headquarters in Washington's Virginia suburbs will feature an address on the state of urban education in America by Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Panel discussions are planned that focus on challenges facing urban schools and how they are being addressed; how the business community can support schools and pro-

grams; and how education and business leaders can work together with the help of the news media in uniting to make a difference.

Luncheon and special guest speakers are also planned for the daylong forum, which is only open to Council members and invited guests. There is no registration fee; however, space is limited.

To register for the pre-Legislative/Policy Conference forum at *USA TODAY*, access <http://www.cgcs.org/conferences/legislative.aspx>.

The *USA TODAY*-Council of the Great City Schools Education Forum is supported by Microsoft Partners in Learning and Best Buy.



## Three Urban Principals Win National Award

When Darlene Brister became principal of Ryan Elementary School in Baton Rouge, La., in 1998, the school was labeled academically “unsatisfactory.”

Twelve years later, Ryan Elementary is one of the top performing schools in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System.

For her efforts in turning around the school, Brister was among 10 principals nationwide to receive the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. The award was presented to principals of the 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools for their exceptional work in fostering successful teaching and learning.

In addition to Brister, two big-city principals from New York City, Laverne Nimmons, principal of Granville T. Woods Public School 335; and Naomi Drouillard, principal of Rosa Parks School-P.S. 254; also were honored.

Founded in 1999, the Terrel H. Bell award is named for a former U.S. secretary of education to honor outstanding leaders who overcome difficult circumstances and maintain a commitment to ensure every student receives an excellent education.

“These schools have thrived under their principal’s leadership,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “They believe



Darlene Brister, principal of Ryan Elementary School in Baton Rouge, La., displays the Key to the City award she received from East Baton Rouge City-Parish Mayor-President “Kip” Holden. Brister received the award for her school being selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School.

every student deserves a high-quality education. Despite their difficult situations, all of their schools are seeing improvement.”

Principals who receive the award must be nominated by a faculty member who

has to write an essay describing what qualities the person exhibits as an outstanding educational leader.

Approximately 302 principals were eligible to receive the 2010 Terrel H. Bell Award.



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## L.A. District Names New Superintendent; Cleveland Schools CEO Retiring

The Los Angeles school board on Jan. 11 unanimously approved Deputy Superintendent John Deasy to take the reins of the nation's second largest school district, effective in April.

He will succeed Superintendent Ramon Cortines, who plans to retire this spring after heading the district for two years "with courageous, compassionate and extraordinary leadership during the most challenging times," said School Board President Monica Garcia in a press statement.

After the announcement, the newly appointed superintendent noted, "Today, this district is facing profound challenges in the form of a major economic crisis which results in a monumental educational crisis, but I believe there's hope."

Deasy joined the Los Angeles Unified School District last July after serving as deputy director of education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where he led the initiative on teacher effectiveness.

Earlier, the veteran educator had been the superintendent of Maryland's Prince George's County Public Schools adjacent to Washington, D.C., and smaller districts in California and Rhode Island.

Deasy's elevation to superintendent of the sprawling Los Angeles public school system elicited a response from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "John understands the urgency of the challenge and he has the courage to make the needed changes to better serve students. L.A. is lucky to have him."

### Surprise Announcement

In Cleveland, CEO of Schools Eugene Sanders in mid-December made a surprise announcement that he would retire Feb. 1 after some four and a half years at the helm.

He reportedly plans to seek the presidency of Bowling Green State University, where he is an honored alumnus and was a professor there.



John Deasy at press conference.

Just last January, Sanders held a major city event to roll out a strategic reform plan to transform schools in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

Peter Raskind, acting chief executive officer of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, has been named interim CEO of the Cleveland school district.

## Council Co-Founder Dies



R. Sargent Shriver

Well known as the founding director of the Peace Corps, R. Sargent Shriver, who died Jan. 18 at age 95, also co-founded the Council of the Great City Schools more than 50 years ago.

In 1956, as president of the Chicago school board, Mr. Shriver delivered the keynote address at the initial meeting of an *ad hoc* group of big-city school leaders that evolved into today's national organization. At the time, he stressed the importance of boosting the quality of vocational education in the nation's cities, which were struggling with the outflow of manufacturing jobs.

"We will remember the contributions of R. Sargent Shriver in helping to build the foundation for the Council," says Michael Casserly, the coalition's executive director.

## Council Partners With Education Dept. To Sponsor Conference On Labor-Management

School board presidents, superintendents and union leaders from around the nation will converge in Denver, Feb. 15-16, to discuss how collaborative labor-management relationships, policies, and agreements can drive student success.

The event is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools and other national education groups representing school teachers, administrators and boards of education.

Invitations to the conference were sent to more than 2,000 school districts that received federal funding in the past year under programs such as Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, School Improvement Grants, and Investing in Innovation. More than 200 responded.

The department is randomly selecting 150 districts to participate, representing urban, suburban and rural school systems.

The board president, superintendent, and teacher association leader of the selected district must all attend the conference, pledging to collaboratively develop and implement policies in such areas as setting strategic direction to advance student achievement and aligning all labor-management work to improve academic performance.

### Reaching Hispanics *continued from page 1*

gram called *Educa* (educate), Denver Public Schools connect with Spanish-speaking parents about school policies, events, and issues in public education," says the institute, which notes that parents can also call with school-related questions.

"The first-of-its-kind program broadcasts on three popular Spanish-language radio stations and has more than doubled its audience -- to 54,200 unique listeners -- over just a few months," it emphasizes.

## Boston, Long Beach Districts Ranked Among World's Improved School Systems

How does a school system with poor performance become good and how does one with good performance become excellent?

That's the focus of a new report analyzing high-performing school systems from around the world.

*How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* by McKinsey & Company examined how 20 school systems have achieved significant gains in student achievement.

Boston Public Schools, California's Long Beach Unified School District and charter school system Aspire Public Schools were the only school districts in the United States to appear in the report. In addition, Boston and Long Beach were labeled as one of 13 "sustained improvers," comprising systems that have seen five years or more of consistent rises in student performance.

### Boston's Progress

The report found that in order for a school system to improve there must be

a system-wide student assessment system that enables officials to identify where student outcomes are improving and devote attention and resources to the areas of highest need.

The report praised Massachusetts and Boston school leaders for successfully combining these two factors in 1998, when the state launched the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), a statewide test. When approximately half of all students in the state failed the MCAS pilot, the state used the results to allocate resources to the neediest school districts.

Boston used its \$5 million in state funding to create summer and after-school programs as well as double-block classes where students stay in the same class for two periods in a row.

District officials also created the MyBPS data system, which contained detailed student achievement data accessible to teachers, principals and administrators. Teachers with successful track records were invited to speak to the leadership about their teaching. And yearly targets were set for each school for increasing their student academic performance and for closing achievement gaps between different socioeconomic groups.

The efforts taken by the state and school system have resulted in greater student achievement. Boston Public Schools has raised the proportion of its students that pass the state exams in mathematics from 23 percent in 1998 to 84 percent in 2008, and those that pass in reading from 43 percent in 1998 to 91 percent in 2008.

"Within this much-improved state, the Boston Public School District is a much-improved district," said the report.

### Long Beach's Success

According to the report, the path to school system improvement relies on the quality of professional development programs available to its educators.

The Long Beach school system was praised in the report for its successful teacher and professional development

programs.

"We wanted all our educators to speak a common language about the craft of teaching, and to have the same calibration of what quality teaching and learning look like," said one Long Beach administrator who was interviewed for the report. "... Our litmus [test] is would you put your child in this school."

The district first looks at student performance data, consisting of test grades and homework assignments. That data is made available through a system known as "School Loop," which provides access to all stakeholders, including parents. Walk-throughs are also held where administrators walk through schools and classrooms with principals and coaches to discuss the data and the school goals.

The district then allocates its coaching resources to support struggling schools. It has created specialized curriculum coaches (expert teachers), who teach struggling educators effective teaching strategies. The district has also created intervention program coaches for principals.

Newly trained teachers are provided with three to five hours of coaching a week during their first year in order to learn good instructional practice and classroom management skills. And during years two to three, teachers receive seven days of professional development each year.

The report also praised the school system for studying the practices of teachers who have made impressive gains and then replicating their practices. For instance, a math teacher in Long Beach inspired by an aunt who taught in Singapore began to get excellent results from his students. The district selected four math coaches to work with the teacher to replicate the program in elementary schools districtwide. As a result, math scores have improved between 20 and 75 percent in second through fifth grades from 2004 to 2009.

The report can be downloaded at <http://sso.mckinsey.com/schools>.

### Report On World's Most Improved School Systems

Systems	Sustained Improvers
1. Singapore	✓
2. Hong Kong	✓
3. South Korea	✓
4. Ontario, Canada	✓
5. Saxony, Germany	✓
6. England	✓
7. Latvia	✓
8. Lithuania	✓
9. Slovenia	✓
10. Poland	✓
11. Aspire Public Schools, USA	✓
12. Long Beach, CA, USA	✓
13. Boston/MA, USA	✓
14. Armenia	✓
15. Western Cape, South Africa	✓
16. Chile	✓
17. Minas Gerais, Brazil	✓
18. Madhya Pradesh, India	✓
19. Ghana	✓
20. Jordan	✓

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2. Hong Kong
3. South Korea
4. Ontario, Canada
5. Saxony, Germany
6. England
7. Latvia
8. Lithuania
9. Slovenia
10. Poland
11. Aspire Public Schools, USA
12. Long Beach, CA, USA
13. Boston/MA, USA
14. Armenia
15. Western Cape, South Africa
16. Chile
17. Minas Gerais, Brazil
18. Madhya Pradesh, India
19. Ghana
20. Jordan

## Cleveland Program to Close Achievement Gap Shows Proof of Success

In an effort to improve the academic achievement of black males and close the racial achievement gap, four years ago the Cleveland Metropolitan School District participated in a program sponsored by Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland.

Since its inception, the Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) initiative has proven successful in increasing the number of participants who were promoted to 10th grade and are now seniors scheduled to graduate in June.

The CTAG program targets low-achieving black males in eighth grade who are deemed most likely to drop out of school. These include students who have failed two or more subjects, are absent 36 or more days, are over age for their current grade level and/or have been suspended five or more days from school.

The program works in collaboration with parents, school administrators, principals, teachers and the community. Mentors, called linkage coordinators, are employed by the district to build relationships with students and monitor their academic, social and emotional issues. And academic tutoring is provided to students to help them pass all five parts of the Ohio Graduation Test and position them to graduate from high school.

A preliminary evaluation of the program revealed that for the 2008-2009 school year, 62 percent of the participating students had advanced one grade level, compared to 43 percent of the rest of the male freshman class. In addition, only 9.1 percent of the first CTAG class did not return to school in the 2008-2009 school year, compared to nearly 40 percent of students not in the program.

Initially, the CTAG program was funded under a two-year state grant, but in 2009 the grant was not renewed by state lawmakers. However, the district was so pleased with the program and its potential to increase the graduation rate that it sought funding to continue the program under the name of CTAG/Students of Promise.



Cleveland Schools CEO Eugene Sanders, right, congratulates a student for participating in the Closing the Achievement Gap program during a recent luncheon held in recognition of National Mentor Month.

The program received good news last year with the announcement of a \$1.5 million grant from Kaiser Permanente. The grant will be used to fund the program, including maintaining the linkage coordinator positions.

“It’s important that we invest money in the resources that our students need most,” said Cleveland Schools CEO Eugene Sanders. “This program is making a difference in the lives of the young men that are involved.”

### Florida’s Top Superintendent



Ronald Blocker

Superintendent Ronald Blocker of the Orange County Public Schools in Orlando is the 2011 Florida Superintendent of the Year.

He is the only leader of a school district represented by the Council of the Great City Schools this year to be named a state’s top superintendent, according to the American Association of School Administrators. He is one of the longest-serving urban school chiefs in the nation, leading the country’s ninth largest school district since 2000.

## Oklahoma City School Board Votes to Change School Calendar

The Oklahoma City school board recently voted unanimously to change the district’s traditional school calendar to a “continuous learning calendar” aimed at helping students retain what they learn and may forget over summer break.

Shifting to the new calendar with the upcoming 2011-12 school year, the summer break will be shortened to eight weeks from 12, with classes beginning Aug. 1 rather than the traditional Aug. 22 school opening.

Subsequently, there will be a two-week fall break, three-day Thanksgiving break, three-week winter break and two-week spring break with the school year ending June 1 rather than the current May 25 last day of classes.

And students who need remedial work will have the opportunity to catch up during the shorter breaks instead of attending summer school.

“This plan moves the district to a seamless educational calendar that will have a positive effect on student growth and achievement,” says Oklahoma City Schools Superintendent Karl Springer in a press statement, indicating that the current number of school days are expected to remain the same with the continuous learning calendar.

## St. Paul Launches Saturday School

Elementary students in Minnesota’s Saint Paul Public Schools were recently provided the opportunity to get extra help in reading and math as a result of a new program the district launched.

Saturday school offered students in grades one through six instruction in math and reading for six consecutive Saturdays.

**Saturday School**, continued on page 8



## Newark School District Going Solar In Program with Electric Company

New Jersey's Newark Public Schools has partnered with PSE&G (Public Service Electric and Gas Company) to implement an innovative solar energy program, *Solar 4 All*.

Under the initiative, more than 9,000 solar panels will be placed on the roofs of five district schools, producing enough energy to power approximately 400 homes. The solar panels will also reduce the district's carbon footprints by 3,000 tons per year.

PSE&G is leasing the roof space at \$100,000 a year, and the agreement is for 20 years. The payment prices will increase yearly depending on energy production quantities and the yearly price increase of electricity. Electricity produced through the solar panels will not directly generate energy for the schools but will flow into the company's system to be used throughout the state.

According to the Newark *Star-Ledger*, the five Newark schools are the first learn-

ing institutions in the state to have solar panels that create energy to flow directly into an electrical grid.

As a fundamental part of the program, the company is also implementing a renewable energy curriculum linked to a certificate of employability in green technology. Aimed at 9<sup>th</sup> graders, the class will be hands-on and will teach students about wind turbines, solar panels and hydro energy. Students also will take field trips and have the opportunity to participate in summer internships.

According to Newark Schools Superintendent Clifford Janey, the district plans to eventually provide solar panels at all district schools.

"...It's Star Trek-like, but it's real," said Janey in the *Star-Ledger*. "And it's the best illustration of why public schools exist. They exist for the development of our children, but also for our families and communities — this makes a connection between all three."

## Chicago Launches World Language Initiative

In an effort to prepare students to succeed in the global workforce as well as reduce the achievement gap between English language learners (ELLs) and other students, Chicago Public Schools is launching the Bilingual Education and World Language (BEWL) initiative.

The program will provide rigorous preK through 12th grade language development options for both ELLs and English-speaking students.

Under the initiative, a dual language pilot program designed to prepare students to speak, read and write at a high level in two languages will be piloted at four elementary schools in the fall. In addition, a heritage language program will be created in 10 to 15 schools to help students reclaim their home language and an International Newcomer Center at Roosevelt

High School will be built for refugee and immigrant students who have been in the country for less than three years.

As part of the BEWL initiative, language programs after school and in the summer will be offered.

The initiative is based on the recommendations of the Bilingual Education and World Language Commission, which included 20 educators, language scholars, public officials and parent leaders.

"Most school district initiatives look at world language and bilingual education separately," said Clare Muñana, Chicago school board vice president. "Chicago's approach is one of the first to integrate the two concepts."

The initiative will be funded with federal stimulus dollars along with support from Chicago Community Trust, a nonprofit organization.



Tracking the Stimulus

## Detroit District Uses Stimulus Funds To Boost Technology

Many urban school systems across the nation are using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to upgrade technology and narrow the digital divide.

As part of its technology program, Detroit Public Schools will provide every middle and high school student with a laptop computer.

The district is spending more than \$49.4 million to purchase 40,000 new netbook computers for students and teachers as well as 5,000 desktop computers and printers/scanners for every classroom.

Under the initiative, every student in grades 6-12 and every teacher will receive or have access to a netbook computer with wireless Internet access that will enable them to access online textbooks as well as conduct Web research, and develop PowerPoint presentations.

"An infusion of technology on this scale is unprecedented in Detroit Public Schools and will truly create 21st century learning environments," said Robert Bobb, Detroit Schools emergency financial manager. "This investment will ensure that any barriers to technological accessibility are removed for our students and open up their classrooms to the world."

Stimulus Funds continued on page 7

## Adopt-A-School Program in Memphis Gaining Success

Memphis Public Schools created its Adopt-A-School program in 1979 with nine partners with the goal of establishing productive partnerships between schools and community supporters, local businesses, civic groups, and faith-based organizations.

Since its creation, the program has been a success and now has more than 650 partners who volunteer their time tutoring and mentoring students at the district's schools.

One of those schools, Treadwell Elementary, has benefited greatly from its Adopt-A-School program. Four years ago, the school was notified by the state that it did not make adequate yearly progress. So in an effort to improve students' scores, members from several faith-based organizations partnered with the school and served as tutors.

The hard work paid off and after the first year, scores on a statewide test improved by 20 percent. And student scores have increased an average of 10 percent a year.

"Students achieve well when they know that there is someone that is rooting for them and knowing there is someone out there who wants to see them excel," said Miska Bibbs, Memphis' Adopt-A-School coordinator in an interview with *MyFOX Memphis* television station.

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### **Stimulus Funds** *continued from page 6*

In an effort to prevent theft of the computer, the laptops will be equipped with theft deterrent features, including the district's "I'm In" logo engraved on the front of each computer and technology that allows district law enforcement to remotely erase or disable the computers.

In December, teachers received their netbooks and training on the new laptops. The laptops for students will arrive in classes in late February.

## Council of the Great City Schools Annual Legislation/ Policy Conference March 19 - 22, 2011 Mayflower Renaissance Hotel, Washington, DC



### **Saturday, March 19, 2011**

Registration  
Continental Breakfast  
Title I Directors Meeting  
Fall Conference Planning Meeting  
Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group Meeting  
Lunch & Meeting of Legislative & Federal Programs Liaisons  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Task Force Meetings  
Great City Colleges of Education Steering Committee Meeting  
New Member & New Attendees Orientation  
Welcome Reception

### **Sunday, March 20, 2011**

Registration  
Buffet Breakfast  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Great City Colleges of Education Meeting  
Lunch and Speaker: **US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan**  
Legislative Briefings  
Reception: Taste of Boston, site of Council's Fall Conference

### **Monday, March 21, 2011**

Breakfast with Speaker  
Legislative Briefings  
Luncheon with Speaker  
Capitol Hill Visits (You must arrange your own appointments)  
Reception on Capitol Hill

### **Tuesday, March 22, 2011**

Breakfast with Speaker



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## 'Champion' in Jackson



Lorenda Cheeks

Principal Lorenda Cheeks of Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools has been named 2010 Grand Champion of the General Mills Feeding Dreams Awards

Program for her dedicated work in the community. Known as "Miss Girl Scout Lady" in the Jackson area, the elementary school principal earned the title for her work with members of five Girl Scout troops.

She was voted grand champion, receiving a \$10,000 grant, among 10 "everyday heroes" nationwide recognized by the giant food company.

### Saturday School *continued from page 5*

The month-long Saturday program was only offered to students who needed the extra instruction. Approximately 220 students participated in the program, which was held at four schools. Students attended classes for four hours and were provided with free breakfast and transportation.

## Council of the Great City Schools 2011 Conference Schedule

<b>Executive Committee Meeting</b>	<b>January 21 - 22</b>	<b>San Francisco, CA</b>
<b>HRD/ Personnel Directors Meeting</b>	<b>February 2 - 4</b>	<b>Austin, TX</b>
<b>Legislative/ Policy Conference</b>	<b>March 19 - 22</b>	<b>Washington, DC</b>
<b>Chief Operating Officers Conference</b>	<b>April 13 - 15</b>	<b>Las Vegas, NV</b>
<b>Bilingual Directors Meeting</b>	<b>May 18 - 21</b>	<b>Las Vegas, NV</b>
<b>E-RATE Meeting (School Districts Only)</b>	<b>June 14</b>	<b>Seattle, WA</b>
<b>Chief Information Officers Meeting</b>	<b>June 15 - 18</b>	<b>Seattle, WA</b>
<b>Executive Committee Meeting</b>	<b>July 8 - 9</b>	<b>Cincinnati, OH</b>
<b>Public Relations Executives Meeting</b>	<b>July 8 - 10</b>	<b>San Antonio, TX</b>
<b>Curriculum Directors &amp; Research/ Assessment Symposium</b>	<b>July 13 - 16</b>	<b>Memphis, TN</b>
<b>Chief Financial Officers Conference</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>Indianapolis, IN</b>
<b>Annual Fall Conference</b>	<b>October 26 - 30</b>	<b>Boston, MA</b>