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Eric Holder

Former Attorney General Addresses Urban Educators

MIAMI--Eric Holder's worst experience as attorney general of the United States occurred at a school. In 2012, Holder, who held the position from 2009 to 2015, visited Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., a few days after a gunman killed 20 students and six adults. He recalled walking into a crime scene that had not yet been cleaned up, with blood on the walls and photos of the students that died, and thanking first responders and crime scene search officers, many of them grizzled veterans who were crying.

When he came back to Washington, D.C., he talked with President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden about implementing gun control. "I thought we had a basis for getting effective gun safety measures; that was my biggest failure as attorney general," said Holder. "Not having the ability, in spite of what happened

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Big-City School Districts Address Post-Election Uncertainty

In one of the most contentious and divisive presidential campaigns in U.S. history, Americans reacted with surprise, fear, anxiety and joy following the Nov. 8 election of business mogul Donald Trump as the nation's 45th president.

While former secretary of state Hillary Clinton won the popular vote count, Trump's electoral college victory was hard to swallow by many Americans.

A number of urban public school districts immediately reached out to their staffs, faculties, students and parents to address their emotions and uncertainty of what might lie ahead with a Trump administration.

In a letter addressed "Dear Boston Public Schools Family," Superintendent Tommy Chang noted, "The coming days and weeks may be challenging for many, and celebratory for others. As educators, we should use this opportunity as a teachable moment to have conversations with our students about the democratic process, how we can resolve differences and conflicts, and how we can address diverse and sometimes conflicting ideology."

Student Concerns

The divisive rhetoric during the campaign and the surprising outcome sparked protests from students in schools and colleges around the nation. The day after the election, students at all high schools in Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools took part in a protest to voice their concerns about the election results and to express their support for each other.

The majority of students in the Des Moines school system are students of color, and they represent more than 100 different nations. More than one out of five students are English language learners.

"The rhetoric of this past election has caused many concerns and divisions among them, their friends and their families," the Des Moines school district posted in an online "For the Record" article.

Supporting Students

The San Diego Unified School District is planning a countywide rally Dec. 14 to support students and their families who may feel vulnerable following the recent presidential election. "We want every child in San Diego, California, and the nation to know that schools are safe places, where you are welcome, no matter your religious background, gender identity or country of national origin," said Superintendent Cindy Marten in a press statement.

Election Uncertainty continued on page 5



Students in Des Moines took part in a protest to voice their concerns about the outcome of the recent presidential election. Photo credit: Phil Roeder/Des Moines Public Schools

Cleveland Schools CEO Named Urban Educator of the Year

MIAMI--When Eric Gordon began his tenure in 2011 as the chief executive officer of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, he was told by many people that he wouldn't be able to tackle the challenges facing him.

But under his leadership, the district implemented a ground-breaking reform initiative called The Cleveland Plan, and has experienced higher graduation rates and an increase in student enrollment for the first time in decades.

As a result, Gordon was recently presented with the Green-Garner Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' 60th Annual Fall Conference here.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK Education and Scholastic, Inc., the award is the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership. It is named for Richard Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City School system, and Edward Garner, a businessman and former school board president of the Denver Public Schools.

Upon accepting the award, Gordon, who jokingly referred to himself as the Susan Lucci of the Green-Garner Award for being a four-time finalist, thanked his



Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon gives remarks after being named the winner of the Green-Garner Award.

fellow nominees, staff and school board and recalled how his wife gave him a card that hangs in his office of a shark plowing through concrete. "It's become my personal emblem of what it means to do this work."

As the winner of the Green-Garner Award, Gordon will receive a \$10,000 scholarship to present to a graduate of his

choice in the Cleveland school system.

Queen Smith Award

Johanna Lopez, a Spanish teacher for 17 years at Colonial High School in Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, was the recipient of the Queen

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D.C. Names New Schools Chancellor; Jackson, Miss. Leader Departs

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser recently named Antwan Wilson, superintendent of California's Oakland Unified School District, to lead the school system in the nation's capital.



Antwan Wilson

He is expected to become the chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools Feb. 1, taking the reins from interim chancellor John Davis, who took the helm in October following Kaya Henderson's five-year tenure in leading Washington's 49,000-student school district.

"In his 20 plus years in education, Antwan Wilson has been a teacher, a principal, an assistant superintendent and a superin-

tendent, and at every level, he has been successful," Mayor Bowser said in a statement.

Wilson became superintendent of the Oakland school system in 2014, and previously served for six years as assistant superintendent for post-secondary readiness in Denver Public Schools.

Jackson Leadership

Superintendent Cedrick Gray of Jackson Public Schools has stepped down after leading the Mississippi district since 2012.

He had recently been named Superintendent of the Year by the National Association of School Superintendents, and served on the Council of the Great City Schools' Executive Committee.

Frederick Murray, the Jackson district's chief academic officer for high schools, has been named interim superintendent.

K.C. and St. Louis Districts Reach Accreditation

For the first time in nearly 30 years, Kansas City Public Schools earned the points necessary for full accreditation under the Missouri School Improvement Program.

In announcing the recent development, Superintendent Mark Bedell said, "Credit goes to our students, teachers, parents, support staff and leadership team, who have worked hard together to make these gains with integrity."

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also released data showing that the St. Louis Public Schools qualified for full accreditation for the second consecutive year.

"I am exceedingly proud of the progress this school district, under the leadership of Dr. Kelvin Adams, has made," said Special Administrative Board President Rick Sullivan. "Turning this district around from where it was 10 – or even five – years ago

has taken focus, determination, dedication and a willingness to change and think outside the box."

Top Florida Leader



Barbara Jenkins

Superintendent Barbara Jenkins of the Orange County Public Schools in Orlando has been named Florida's 2017 Superintendent of the Year by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents.

Under her leadership since 2012, the district has received a number of honors, including the Governor's Sterling Award in 2015 and 2014, the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2014, and named to the College Board's AP (Advanced Placement) District Honor Roll for three of the last five years.

Council Math, Science Scholars Excelling In Career Pursuits

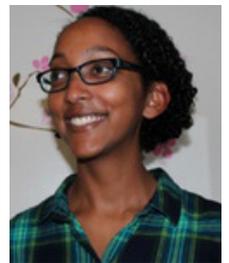
In 2010, four graduating high school seniors -- three from different states -- shared something in common: winning the first ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships awarded by the Council of the Great City Schools.

They competed among students in 65 big-city school districts across the nation in a scholarship program created to assist students of diverse backgrounds who plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

So, after six years, what are these scholars doing today?

Urban Educator caught up with three of them, and found they are excelling in their career pursuits – and the scholarships helped.

Sarah Edris, who graduated in 2010 from the School of the Talented and Gifted in the Dallas Independent School District, is now in London, working as a software engineer.



Sarah Edris

"I was really lucky to have it [the scholarship]. It helped to fully fund college," she says in a phone interview from London, indicating that she has no student loans to pay off.

She earned her baccalaureate degree in 2014 in computer science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She then went on to earn a master's degree in computer science in 2016 from MIT.

Last March, Edris, who likes to travel and wanted to work abroad, went to work with Google in London as a software engineer.

At age 24, her career aspirations are to use her skills in the future "in some sort of meaningful way to have an impact on the world," she says.

Scholars Excelling continued on page 9

Surrogate Gives Glimpse of Trump’s Position on Education

MIAMI--During the 2016 presidential campaign between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, the candidates gave their opinions about many different issues ranging from immigration and health care to national security. But very little was heard from either candidate on the issue of education.

So it was no surprise that a standing room only crowd was on hand for a 90-minute town hall meeting featuring surrogates from the Clinton and Trump campaigns discussing their candidate’s positions on public education. The town hall, which also featured a panel of two big-city school superintendents and a board member, was held in conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools 60th Annual Fall Conference and moderated by broadcast journalist Dan Rather.



Moderator Dan Rather

“What would be the first thing Donald Trump would change [regarding education]?” Rather asked Trump surrogate Carl Paladino, a school board member from New York’s Buffalo Public Schools.

“The solution for Donald Trump is a system that’s based in charters, vouchers and tax credits, which will encourage competition in the marketplace...” said Paladino.

Rather also asked Clinton surrogate and former education adviser Mildred Otero the same question. She said that the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act shifts power back to states and the discussion should focus on how states and local districts can reform.

“We want to be a partner with states as they implement

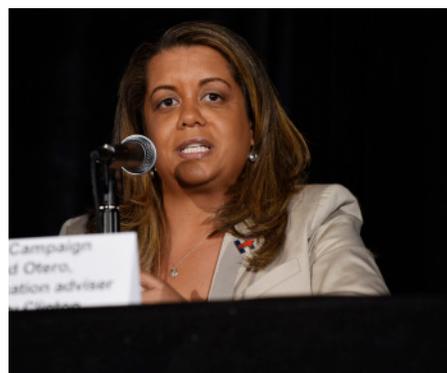
the new law,” said Otero.

Melanie Bates, vice president of the Cincinnati Board of Education, said that her district is experiencing growing enrollment and improved academic achievement. “Our charter and voucher students test scores trend lower than [Cincinnati] students test scores,” she noted.

William Hite, superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, was asked by Rather what his school district’s policy was regarding charter and private schools.

According to Hite, there are 83 charter schools authorized by the district but “we try to provide children with great schools, period.” He said his district has been able to com-

Town Hall *continued on page 5*



Mildred Otero



Carl Paladino

Voters Weigh in On Education Ballot Issues



Several big-city school districts received good news on Election Day.

A \$1.5-billion bond measure was approved for California’s Long Beach Unified School District

that will be used for health and safety improvements such as upgrading science labs, libraries and fire alarms.

A \$668.7-million bond was approved for Texas’ El Paso Independent School District that will provide funds to close nine schools and consolidate them into rebuilt campuses, make instructional technology, safety and security upgrades and purchase new buses.

Voters approved a \$572-million bond that will enable Denver Public Schools to build and improve schools and \$56.6-million in operating dollars to fund an early literacy and classroom technology initiative.

Texas’ San Antonio Independent School District will make major renovations at 13 schools, replace infrastructure systems and upgrade science labs, as a result of the passage of a \$450-million bond as well as an increased maintenance and operations tax rate that will raise an estimated \$32.1 million.

And Oklahoma City Public Schools can make improvements to heating and air-conditioning systems, purchase new computers and replace aging buses, with the passage of a \$180-million bond.

Ohio Voters Pass Measures

Columbus City Schools will begin implementing a five-year plan to expand pre-K, place more social workers and licensed nurses in schools and reduce class sizes by adding more teachers, as a result of the passage of a combined levy/bond. The measure also provides the ability for the district

Ballot Issues *continued on page 5*

Town Hall *continued from page 4*

pare public charter schools with public schools and the outcomes fall evenly across sectors. “There are high performing charters and low performing charters and there are high performing district schools and low performing district schools,” said Hite. “The outcomes are mixed, but district schools on a whole outperform charter schools.”

Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, observed that poor students in non-urban districts often perform the same as poor students in suburban and big-city school systems. But he said the difference is that there are a lot more poor students in urban districts. He said that while his district is one of the poorest in the country, it is one of the top performing. “So there is hope,” said Carvalho. “We cannot forget the necessary safety nets that some kids need.”

Questioning Common Core

“Will your candidate increase or eliminate support for the common core?” Rather asked Paladino.

“I do not believe Donald Trump will tolerate the common core any longer,” said Paladino, who believes that to try to have one national program and use it for purposes such as evaluating teachers is a failing concept. “Education in the future is going to be done on more of a state and local level,” said Paladino.

He was also asked by Rather if a Trump presidency would seek to do away with the Department of Education?

The former co-chair of the New York State Trump-Pence campaign said that he has never discussed eliminating the department with Trump, but said that he would expect there to be some adjustments in areas where the department has overex-



Panel of Miami Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, Cincinnati school board member Melanie Bates and Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite participates in the Council's town hall meeting.

tended itself, intruding in areas that were unnecessary such as civil rights issues.

During a question-and-answer session, the surrogates were asked who might their candidates choose for the position of secretary of education.

“I don't expect a person from the [traditional] education world but someone who can act objectively...” said Paladino.

Miami Schools Superintendent Carvalho asked a question on behalf of a former student named Daniela who graduated as a valedictorian of her class with a grade-point-average of 6.42, but three weeks before her graduation received a deportation notice. “What is the solution to this problem?” he asked.

Paladino said that Trump has discussed immigration a great deal and believes in locking down the country's borders. Although he cited the example of a person coming across the border from Mexico and receiving a driver's license and being able to vote, he said that situation was very different from the student Carvalho mentioned, who should be given a waiver to stay in the country. “If you understand the nature of a Donald Trump, he will protect that child,” said Paladino.

And despite their vast differences, there was actually one area the two surrogates were able to agree on and that was the need to provide access to high quality preK. “[Clinton] has an aggressive plan to offer students high quality preK,” said Otero, while Paladino said, “those formative years are the most important and he [Trump] will devote the resources.”

Ballot Issues *continued from page 4*

to borrow up to \$125 million for needed infrastructure repairs.

A \$48-million levy for Cincinnati Public Schools was approved, providing the school district with funds to expand its Preschool Promise program. And the renewal of a 15-mill levy will generate up to \$69.7 million a year for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

A renewal levy for Minneapolis Public Schools that was set to expire after the 2016-17 school year was approved by more than 83 percent of the voters, providing funding for classroom teachers and academic and behavioral specialists.

And voters in Detroit passed an enhancement millage that will provide \$18 million for students in the Detroit Public Schools Community District.

Not all districts received good news at the ballot box. A tax measure to fund art and music programs and services for struggling learners in California's Sacramento City Unified School District failed. And a 1 percent sales tax to increase the salaries for teachers in Oklahoma, which would have helped Oklahoma City Public Schools and Tulsa Public Schools, also failed.

Election Uncertainty *continued from page 1*

“We want to bring everyone together from across the political spectrum, across all racial and ethnic groups and across all communities in our county to say we support students,” said San Diego Unified school board member Richard Barrera. “What we need now is no more division. What we need now is unity, tolerance and respect for others.”

In a letter to North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, Superintendent Sharon Contreras summed up the post-election by quoting the late Robert F. Kennedy, “All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.”

Council conference *continued from page 1*

at Sandy Hook, to turn the nation into a place where effective gun safety measures were put in place.”

Holder spoke about his experience in an address to more than 1,000 urban school superintendents, senior administrators, board members and deans of colleges of education assembled here for the Council’s 60th Annual Fall Conference.

A graduate of New York City public schools, he thanked conferees for their work to improve the quality of education and called them the best crime fighters. He said that as the 82nd attorney general of the United States he worked to ensure schools had the support they needed to provide pathways to success, rather than pipelines to the criminal justice system.

But he lamented the fact that too many students are diverted from success by unnecessarily harsh discipline policies that exclude them from schools for minor infractions.

“Too many of our students are suspended, expelled and even arrested for minor transgressions,” said Holder, who noted that disparities in discipline begin as early as pre-school.

He cited statistics that while black students make up 18 percent of students in preschool, they account for 42 percent of students with an out-of-school suspension.

In addition, African American students are suspended and expelled at three times the rate of white students and arrested more and referred to law enforcement in greater numbers.

Holder believes that students must be safe and held to a high standard of accountability whenever they disrupt the learning process or attempt to harm those around them.

“Effective discipline is always and will be a necessity,” said Holder, “but a routine school discipline infraction should land a student in a principal’s office, not a police precinct.”

The first African American to serve as attorney general, Holder said that the problem of implicit bias must be addressed because students of color are too often



Donna Brazile

viewed negatively, even by educators of the same race.

As a result, the conduct of one student might be seen as a minor behavior issue, while that same conduct by a black or Latino student is seen as threatening.

He said that the Justice Department worked with the U.S. Education Department to create the Supportive School Discipline Initiative in 2011 to make schools not only safer, but help school districts implement discipline without discrimination.

“We can all be proud of what we achieved in recent years, but none of us can be complacent,” said Holder.

He recalled that he has done things his father, an immigrant, could never have achieved, and is optimistic that the country will succeed in improving schools and empowering young people to live a better and more prosperous future.

“But it’s not just enough to say we’ve made progress,” stressed Holder. “Progress is not a destination, it’s just a measure of what you are doing.”

Passion for Teaching

Donna Brazile has held many positions throughout her life: chair of the Democratic National Committee, presidential campaign manager and best-selling author.

But the one position she has enjoyed the most is being a teacher. “I’ve been an educator since 1993 and it’s the only thing I really feel passionate about,” said Brazile in a speech to urban educators.

Brazile, who currently teaches a class at Georgetown University, thanked the Council of the Great City Schools for its 60 years of service to America’s urban schoolchildren.

“Sixty years you have been working to keep urban schools vibrant as the communities they serve and that’s something you should be proud of,” Brazile told conferees. “And because of your work, our urban cities bare no resemblance to the nightmare of what Donald Trump seems to think they are.”

She recalled how Sargent Shriver, who helped found the Council in 1956, was the driving force behind many of President’s Kennedy’s signature programs, including the Head Start program.

The program holds a very special place in her heart because her first experience in school was as a Head Start student.

She has never forgotten her first grade teacher Ms. Collins, who taught her how to write, or her other teachers because they made such a major impact on her life.

“At 56 years old, that’s why I can name all of my first eight teachers,” noted Brazile. “They put something in me that I still have today.”

During a recent visit to Spelman College, where she received an honorary degree, she met a student who told her that she was a Donna Brazile scholar. “I started the Donna Brazile Education Foundation as my way of giving back and paying it forward,” said Brazile.

She believes that educators must not only help students become confident and skilled citizens, but also moral citizens, and recalled that Martin Luther King said intelligence plus character is the true goal of education.

“We must prepare our students and ourselves for life as it is, but we must also prepare our students and ourselves to make life better than it is.”

The political commentator said that as she travels the country she tries to encourage everyday citizens to get involved and engage in their own future and try to make a difference in their community by answering the call to service.

“If we believe in what Sargent Shriver understood and Martin Luther King gave his life for, then we have to continue to make that part of our daily quest, how to build a more perfect union,” said Brazile.

Council Conference *continued on page 7*

Council Conference *continued from page 6*

Education For Everyone

Also addressing the conference was Sal Khan, the founder and CEO of Khan Academy, a learning platform that includes instructional videos, practice exercises and teacher tools with more than 46 million registered users.

Khan Academy began 12 years ago in 2004 when Khan, an analyst at an investment firm, began to tutor his 12-year-old cousin who tested into a remedial math class.

After several tutoring sessions conducted over the phone, his cousin was retested and placed in an advanced math class.

“Word got around in my family that free tutoring was going on,” recalled Khan, who began tutoring 10-15 cousins. And what he noticed is that they were all bright students but had accumulated gaps in their learning. “I started writing software for them; that was the first Khan Academy.”

He began to record the lessons as videos and upload them on YouTube, and by 2009 there were about 50,000 people viewing them every month. It was at this point Khan quit his job to work full-time on the site and set it up as a not-for-profit, with the hope that it could one day reach millions of people.



Sal Khan

“You have to start with delusional optimism whenever you do something entrepreneurial,” said Khan. After nine months of trying to financially support the site, he was considering giving up when he received a \$110,000 donation from a woman whose children used his videos and wanted to help him reach his goal, of providing a “free world class education for anyone, anywhere.”

With backing from The Gates Foundation, as well as Google and other organizations, he was able to build a team and immediately start working on creating the software platform. “Videos are nice and still a part of Khan Academy,” said Khan, “but to learn something you have to get practice and feedback and information about where

you are and where you aren’t.”

According to Khan, more and more people are using the site as a replacement of traditional textbooks. He cited a study by the New England Board of Higher Education across all of their community colleges, which found that 73 percent of the students preferred Khan Academy to their textbooks.

Khan has also started a partnership with the College Board to provide free SAT and PSAT prep for students in an effort to address decades of inequity around preparation for the college entrance exam.

The partnership enables any student taking the PSAT to synchronize their account with their Khan Academy account. “It’s not about gaming the system but filling in those gaps and learning the information properly,” said Khan, “because that’s the best way to prepare for college.”

And Khan Academy is global, available in several languages and used in countries ranging from France to Mongolia.

“Education has always been scarce and expensive but we are in a special time in history because we can give students access to whatever they want,” said Khan. “I think together we have a chance of making education like drinking water, a fundamental human right.”

College Board, Khan Academy Partner With Council to Aid Urban Students

A partnership recently launched among the Council of the Great City Schools, the College Board and the Khan Academy aims to boost college and career readiness in urban school districts.

The new initiative invites Council member school districts to sign up for the Official SAT Practice All In Challenge, which offers free, online personalized SAT preparation tools to help urban students prepare for the SAT exam and postsecondary success by accessing the Khan Academy’s Official SAT Practice site.

“With the ‘SAT Practice All in Challenge,’ school districts across the country are working to level the playing field for

every student practicing for the SAT and preparing for college success,” said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly in announcing the initiative at the organization’s recent Fall Conference in Miami.

Thus far, some 25 big-city school districts have signed up for the challenge, with others considering participation.

“It is wrong to test young people over and over and reminding them of their limitations of which they are highly aware by high school, and not delivering to them personalized help,” said David Coleman, president of the College Board, at the conference.

One of the goals of the initiative is to

encourage students to spend meaningful time using the free practice tools provided online. The tools were built to enhance a student’s SAT knowledge, skill set, and overall preparedness.

At the Council conference, a student from Booker T. Washington High School of the Houston Independent School District noted that she had practiced on the Khan Academy site daily after school, resulting in a 470-point boost in her SAT scores.

Districts can sign up for the challenge by accessing SATPracticeChallenge@collegeboard.org.

Journal Chronicles Council's 60 Years

As 2016 winds down, the Council of the Great City Schools paused this year to reflect on and celebrate 60 years of service to the nation's urban public school systems.

It has grown from 12 big-city school districts in 1956 to 70 urban public school systems today, evolving over the years into a national policy and research organization that is considered the voice in representing the needs of large city school districts and the more than 7.3 million students they serve.

"Over the course of the last 60 years, the Council and its membership have faced enormous challenges," says a journal published by the coalition to chronicle its history titled *1956-2016 – Celebrating 60 Years of Service to America's Urban Public Schools*.



"... Questions of race and language, governance, school choice, academic performance and mobility remain on the Council's agenda, as they are expected to remain for many years to come.

"But the Council and its membership have built a strong enough foundation over the years that together we should be able to move forward with a greater sense of confidence that public schooling in the nation's major urban areas will not only survive but thrive," the journal

stresses, which also gives "a look ahead."

The 58-page booklet on the history of the Council can be accessed at www.cgcs.org.

Des Moines Holds First Young Men Of Color Conference

Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools recently held its first ever Young Men of Color Conference. More than 200 middle and high school students attended the conference, sponsored by the Des Moines school district, Drake University and several local non-profit organizations.

The one-day conference was held on the campus of Drake University and was created to allow students to interact with inspiring role models in a positive environment.

"It is going to impact students' lives and improve outcomes and it is absolutely the right thing for the district to be involved," said Matt Smith, Des Moines chief of schools. "We owe it to these young men."

The conference included multiple workshops aimed at college planning, financial literacy, and social networking.

Students also heard from several keynote speakers who work for the Des

Moines school system, such as Corey Harris, the district's director of middle schools, who told the conferees, "I never thought seriously about going to college until I was in 12th grade. But because I had al-

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Students from Des Moines Public Schools attend the district's first Young Men of Color Conference. Photo credit: Jon Lemons/Des Moines Public Schools

Urban Educator continued from page 2



Johanna Lopez, center, a teacher for 17 years in Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, is presented with the Queen Smith Award, from left, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly and a McGraw-Hill representative.

Smith Award for Urban Education. The \$5,000 award is named in honor of the late vice president of urban programs for Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

Lopez, who is now an instructional coach in multilingual services, is also the 2017 Orange County Teacher of the Year, the first Hispanic to receive the honor.

Urban Impact Award

The Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, an affiliate group of deans working with urban school leaders, presented the Dr. Shirley Schwartz Urban Impact Award to Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cleveland State University for the Campus International School, which is based at the university and opened in 2010. The K-8 school is popular with families, filling its seats by lottery every year and keeping a waiting list.



Winners receive the Urban Education Impact Award from Lehman College CUNY Dean Deborah Shanley, second from right.

Scholars Excelling *continued from page 3*

Named for former NASA astronaut Dr. Bernard Harris Jr., the first African American to walk in space, the scholarship is awarded annually to African-American and Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 70 urban school districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools. Each of four scholars selected receives \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field.

Physician-Bound

Leangelo Hall, a 2010 graduate of Coral Reef Senior High in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, today is a second-year student at Harvard Medical School.

After graduating high school, he went straight to Princeton University, where he worked three jobs – two on campus and served as a care coordinator at a homeless prevention center.

Raised in a single-parent household with two brothers, he says in an *Urban Educator* interview, “Financial concerns were something we always discussed.” He said the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship was instrumental in his education, helping to pay for tuition and a laptop computer, which he still uses today.



Leangelo Hall

Moreover, Hall points out that winning the highly competitive national scholarship gave him confidence to excel at the Ivy League university, especially in coming

from a public school to fit in with many students who were not from a big-city school district.

Before graduating from Princeton in 2014, earning a bachelor’s degree in ecology and evolutionary biology, he had to write a required thesis. He spent two months in Kenya doing research leading to his thesis -- “The Impacts of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene on Diarrheal Disease in Laikipia, Kenya.”

Hall took a year off from school after earning his undergraduate degree from Princeton and worked for a year in Philadelphia at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital as a HIV counselor and tester in the Emergency Department.

He enrolled at Harvard Medical School in August 2015. At age 23, he’s not sure at this point what medical specialty he wants to pursue, but says his primary focus is “to take care of patients.”

“I have no idea what field of medicine I want to pursue,” he explains. As a second-year Harvard medical student, he is rotating in various fields, and now in pediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Energy-Minded

Laura Montoya Ashton, a 2010 graduate of Sandia High School in the Albuquerque Public Schools, is also in school today, seeking a master’s degree in mechanical engineering at Cornell University.

After high school, Ashton went on to pursue a baccalaureate degree in chemical engineering from the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. The ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Scholarship “helped me get through college; it was very helpful,” she says in an interview.

Moreover, she notes that since the scholarship is also named for the giant ExxonMobil oil and gas company, it probably contributed to her interest in the energy sector.

She graduated from New Mexico Tech in 2014, and then worked as a ballistics engineer with an oil and gas company in Texas for two years. She also got married.



Laura Montoya Ashton

Subsequently, she accepted a position at Sandia National Laboratories, which sent her to Cornell to earn her master’s degree. She enrolled at the Ivy League university last August.

The 25-year-old’s career aspiration is to become a research engineer working on developing “the energy system of the future,” she emphasizes.

The fourth winner of the inaugural ExxonMobil Bernard Harris scholarship program in 2010 was Anthony Miller, who graduated from Sickles High School in Florida’s Hillsborough County school system in Tampa. He couldn’t be reached, but was headed to the University of Florida to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering six years ago.

“We are proud of the winners of this highly competitive scholarship program,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “These young men and women will be able to become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow thanks to the generous support of ExxonMobil and the encouragement of Dr. Harris.”



Bernard Harris

Expectations and Speculations

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States has prompted an avalanche of opinions and prognostications on possible changes in federal education policy. Nearly everyone in Washington has an opinion or has been asked for one. The value of such speculation, however, is in inverse relation to its amount and frequency. The Council of the Great City Schools is actively avoiding ongoing speculation—for the moment. Either way, the organization's policies and positions will continue to reflect its long-range priorities, values, and goals without regard to partisanship.

Nonetheless, a few observations might be warranted and irresistible. For instance, the process of enacting federal legislation is a cumbersome undertaking, typically requiring some degree of bicameral and bipartisan cooperation. This won't change. However, the traditional procedures for legislating, particularly in the U.S. Senate, are more complicated since the body was designed to be more deliberative—and the chamber is even more sharply divided than before. In addition, the expedited legislative process of “budget reconciliation” is limited to actions resulting in reducing federal expenditures rather than transforming federal policies. Even in the aftermath of an election, enacting, revising or repealing most federal statutes is neither quick nor assured—regardless of how eager the administrative or legislative branches may be.

On the other hand, much of the federal government's business is not really conducted through federal legislation. Regulations and other executive actions, including enforcement of laws, rest primarily with executive branch agencies under the leadership of the president. While federal regulations must follow certain basic procedural rules, such as those laid out in the Administrative Procedures Act, their revision or repeal is not particularly complicated or time-consuming. A plethora of regulations across multiple federal agencies, including the Labor Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, and even the Education Department, could now be subject to review and revision. Other executive actions, including federal-contracting policies, foreign relations, and immigration enforcement actions, can be modified or reversed even more expeditiously than regulatory changes.



To be sure, a variety of new rules promulgated by the Education Department under the Obama administration are expected to be reconsidered in both elementary and secondary and higher education sectors. For example, recently finalized regulations and any proposed regulations that may be finalized in the waning days of the outgoing administration are subject to a rarely used congressional review process to discourage “midnight” regulating by a lame duck administration. The Congressional Review Act (sec. 251 of Public Law 104-121) was enacted in 1996 to create a process for Congress to overturn executive branch regulations. While CRA action cannot be filibustered in the Senate, it still requires a presidential signature to take effect. Not surprisingly the CRA has only been used successfully one time -- to overturn a Labor Department regulation in 2001 following the change of administrations from President Clinton to President George W. Bush.

It seems likely that a number of federal regulations finalized within the 60 legislative-“session”-days preceding the new Trump Administration may be subject to a CRA “resolution of disapproval.” President-elect Donald Trump is expected to sign these resolutions and void regulations that the new administration disapproves of. Among the federal regulations that are candidates for CRA disapproval are the proposed regulations to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including the pending supplement-not-supplant regulations, the accountability and state plan regulations, and the assessment regulations. The CRA, however, is an “all or nothing” mechanism by which the entire final regulation must be overturned, in contrast to the regular legislative process through which Congress could invalidate, amend, or repeal parts of a final rule.

At this point, the reversal of a considerable number of federal regulations and executive actions appears nearly certain. Any remaining uncertainty may be related simply to timing and the vagaries of an uncertain political situation.

Pictorial of 60th Annual Fall Conference



Broadcast journalist Dan Rather, left, talks with former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.



Council Chair Felton Williams welcomes conferees to the 60th Annual Fall Conference.



Los Angeles Schools Superintendent Michelle King listens intently during a conference session.



Carmen Fariña, chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, presents information at a session on promoting equity and excellence in urban school districts.



Arlington (Texas) Schools Superintendent Marcelo Cavazos participates in a session.

Photos by Clarence Tabb Jr.



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City Schools Leader, Teacher and CFO Honored



Robert Runcie Superintendent of the Year award by the National Alliance of Black School Educators. The award honors school district superintendents who have shown a quality of leadership that resulted in significant positive outcomes for students of African descent.

Runcie, who has been the superintendent of Broward County Public Schools since 2011, was recognized for his efforts to close achievement gaps and improve school discipline by erasing the schoolhouse to jailhouse pipeline.

Baltimore Teacher Honored

Also receiving an award was Athanasia

Robert Runcie, superintendent of Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, was recently presented with the Joseph E. Hill

Superintendent of

Kyriakakos, an art teacher at Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School in Baltimore. She was recently selected as the Maryland State Teacher of the Year. This marks the second consecutive year a teacher from the Baltimore City Public Schools has been named the winner.

An art teacher since 2011, Kyriakakos encourages her students to seek knowledge through the arts. Many of her students have received awards for their artistic pieces, and her own artwork has been recognized on the international stage.

Miami CFO Wins Award

Judith Marte, chief financial officer with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, recently received the Bill Wise Award, sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools and AXA, a financial service company. This annual honor is bestowed upon a school business official who exemplifies professionalism, integrity, and outstanding service to urban education.

Marte received the award in San Anto-

nio during the Council's annual Chief Financial Officers Conference.

A 14-year veteran of the school system and chief financial officer since 2014, Marte oversees the management of the district's financial transactions, including directing the preparation and management of the district's \$4.6 billion annual operating budget.

The Bill Wise Award was originally established in 2000 and is named after an outstanding financial leader from the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.

Des Moines *continued from page 8*

ways taken my schoolwork seriously, I was offered a full academic scholarship. I had kept myself in the game."

Students were also asked to sign a Call to Action and pledge "to take immediate action to stop derailing behaviors, habits, thoughts and deeds...exhibiting appropriate behaviors, completing all classes with high grades, attaining a healthy lifestyle and graduating from high school college-prepared and career-ready."