



- Santa Ana Chief, p.3
 - Top Urban Educator, p.5
- LEGISLATIVE**
- Grand Bargain, p.10



Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks reviews student's creation.

Students Create Mementos for Council Conference

The banging coming from Glenna Omlor's class last month at Albuquerque's Desert Ridge Middle School was the sound of art – tin-punch folk art to be shared with educators from across the nation.

For the past month or so, Albuquerque Public Schools students like the seventh and eighth graders at Desert Ridge have been creating mementos for attendees of the Council of the Great City Schools 57th Annual Fall Conference in Albuquerque.

More than 3,000 items will be given out at the conference, Oct. 30-Nov. 3, to some 1,000 urban educators from around the nation expected

Council Conference *continued on page 4*

Houston Superintendent Credits 'Team HISD' for Winning Top Prize

When U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently announced the winner of the top prize in urban education at the Library of Congress, administrators and staff of the Houston school system erupted in cheers as they watched a live broadcast of the Washington event from school district headquarters.

The Houston Independent School District had just been named the winner of the 2013 Broad Prize for Urban Education that recognizes an urban school district for making the greatest progress in raising student achievement.

Accepting the award from Secretary Duncan, Houston Superintendent Terry

Grier immediately credited his educators for the district's award-winning performance.

"Our teachers in the classroom have stepped up," he stressed in a press statement.

"We have the best teacher corps and the best principals and support staff in the country. We're very humbled to accept this award on behalf of Team HISD."

As the Broad Prize winner, the nation's seventh largest school district receives \$550,000 in college scholarships for its high school seniors. "The chance to give out \$550k in scholarships signifies that

Team HISD *continued on page 4*



Houston school district's Apollo School Support Officer Kenneth Davis, left, and Assistant Superintendent Lance Menster react to news of their district's Broad Prize victory. Photo Credit: Dave Einzel

Education Secretary Names Blue Ribbon Schools

At New Mission High School in Boston, 92 percent of students scored advanced or proficient in 10th grade English and 86 percent scored advanced or proficient in 10th grade math. To achieve these results, students utilize Saturday classes, an after-school Homework Academy that offers one-on-one help with teachers, and tutors and personal advising.

With average class sizes of 22 students a teacher, the high school is a small school community that encourages academic growth. Every year Headmaster Naia Wilson and her staff visit each class to discuss with students which courses would benefit them most. Through consultation with their families and academic counselors, the students pick a schedule that draws a path to academic success beyond high schools.

Creating multiple pathways to increased student achievement is just one of the reasons the school was selected as a Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

New Mission High School is one of 286 public and private schools in the nation to receive a 2013 National Blue Ribbon



Las Vegas City Councilman Bob Coffin, left, provides supplies to Katie Decker, principal of Las Vegas' Walter Bracken STEAM Academy, as she and students celebrate their Blue Ribbon School status.

Award. The honor was awarded based on overall academic excellence or for success in closing achievement gaps among disadvantaged and minority students.

“Excellence in education matters and we should honor the schools that are leading the way to prepare students for success in college and careers,” said U.S.

Blue Ribbon continued on page 3



Council officers

Chair

Valeria Silva
Superintendent, St. Paul Public Schools

Chair-elect

Eileen Cooper Reed
Board Member, Cincinnati

Secretary-Treasurer

Richard Carranza
Superintendent, San Francisco

Executive Director
Michael Casserly

Editor
Henry Duvall
hduvall@cgcs.org

Associate Editor
Tonya Harris
tharris@cgcs.org

Staff Writer
Danyell Taylor
dtaylor@cgcs.org

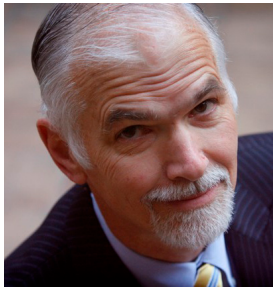
A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 66 of the nation's largest urban public school districts.

Albuquerque	Charlotte	East Baton Rouge	Los Angeles	Oklahoma City	San Diego
Anchorage	Chicago	Fort Worth	Louisville	Omaha	San Francisco
Atlanta	Cincinnati	Fresno	Miami-Dade	Orange Co.	Santa Ana
Austin	Clark Co.	Greensboro	Milwaukee	Palm Beach	Seattle
Baltimore	Cleveland	Houston	Minneapolis	Philadelphia	Shelby Co.
Birmingham	Columbus	Indianapolis	Nashville	Pittsburgh	St. Louis
Boston	Dallas	Jackson	Newark	Portland	St. Paul
Bridgeport	Dayton	Jacksonville	New Orleans	Providence	Tampa
Broward Co.	Denver	Kansas City	New York City	Richmond	Toledo
Buffalo	Des Moines	Little Rock	Norfolk	Rochester	Washington DC
Charleston	Detroit	Long Beach	Oakland	Sacramento	Wichita

All news items should be submitted to:
Urban Educator

Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 702 • Washington, DC 20004
(202) 393-2427 • (202) 393-2400 (fax)

Santa Ana Names New Superintendent; Broward Co. Extends Leader's Contract



Rick Miller

California's Santa Ana Unified School District has selected a veteran educator with 40 years of educational experience as its superintendent.

Rick Miller will lead the 56,000-student school system, succeeding acting superintendent Stefanie Phillips.

Miller was superintendent of California's Riverside Unified School District for five years and under his leadership, the district was recognized as a leader in the use

of instructional technology, and student achievement increased with the number of schools meeting the state's Academic Performance Index target doubling from 13 in 2009 to 26 in 2013.

"Our goal in Santa Ana Unified is to provide students a world class education that ensures they are prepared for college and career," said school board president José Alfredo Hernandez. "Dr. Miller understands that, and is ready to work collaboratively with all of the stakeholders in our community to reach this goal for the benefit and success of our students."

Contract Extension

Robert Runcie has been the superintendent of Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for two years and during his tenure, the district opened its first military academy, introduced the district's three-year strategic plan, reduced class sizes, expanded technical and vocational educational programs, and launched a Black Male Success Task Force to address the poor graduation rates and high number of suspensions among the district's black male students.



Robert Runcie

As a result, the school board recently approved a five-year contract extension for Runcie that will have him at the helm of the nation's sixth largest school district until 2019.

As part of the contract negotiations process, Runcie did not request a salary increase. "This is not just a job to me, it's a mission," said Runcie in a press release. "I thank my school board for the opportunity to continue the progress."

Blue Ribbon *continued from page 2*

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in a press release. "National Blue Ribbon schools represent examples of educational excellence, and their work reflects the belief that every child in America deserves a world-class education."

In addition to New Mission High School, big-city schools in Anchorage, Birmingham, Charlotte, Chicago, Greensboro, N.C., Las Vegas, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Oklahoma City, San Diego and San Francisco were named Blue Ribbon schools. New York City had six schools awarded.

Schools were selected for Blue Ribbon distinction in two categories. The first category is "Exemplary High Performing," for schools whose students achieve in the top 10 percent of their state assessment test regardless of their background. The second category is "Exemplary Improving," for schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that greatly improved student performance to high levels on state tests.

To celebrate their achievement, each school will be honored Nov. 18-19 in Washington, D.C., at an awards ceremony.

Cleveland 'Tests' Applicant Attitudes in Teacher Recruitment

Officials in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District strongly feel that to be a successful teacher, not only must the person be qualified but also believe that all students, no matter what their circumstance or background, can achieve at high levels.

Which is why applicants who want to teach in Cleveland schools must take an online test designed to measure their attitudes on working with urban schoolchildren.

According to Cleveland's *The Plain Dealer*, the district has required people applying for approximately 150 teaching positions in the school district this fall to undergo a test to determine if they are up for the challenge of working with the district's students, many who come from economi-

"I know you have the head. I want to see if you have the heart."

—Serena Houston-Edwards,
Deputy Chief of Human Resources

cally disadvantaged families.

The test also measures other factors such as the applicant's attitudes toward parents and how they would respond to working in a big-city school district with its large bureaucracy.

"I know you have the head," Serena Houston-Edwards, the district's deputy chief of human resources, said in the *Plain Dealer*, to a group of people waiting to apply for teaching positions. "I want to see if you have the heart."

This fall marks the first time in several years that the Cleveland school system has had to hire a large number of teachers.

TEAM HISD *continued from page 1*

what we spend our time on every day is helping to give our students better opportunities,” said Houston Board of Education President Anna Eastman.

This is the second time that the Houston school system has won the Broad (rhymes with “road”) Prize from the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. It first won the top honor in 2002, the award’s inaugural year. And it is the only urban school system to win the award twice.

“Houston’s unwavering focus on empowering teachers and principals, raising expectations for educators and students alike, and improving opportunities for all students is an example for other public school systems across the country and evidence that success is possible,” Secretary Duncan said.

The \$1-million Broad Prize each year recognizes four of 75 large urban school districts in America that are demonstrating the greatest improvement in student



Houston Schools Superintendent Terry Grier, center, receives congratulations for Broad Prize win from Eli Broad and Education Secretary Arne Duncan, right.

achievement. The 2013 finalists were selected by a 17-member review board.

The other three finalists for the 2013 Broad Prize, each receiving \$150,000 in college scholarships, are Corona-Norco Unified School District in Riverside County, Calif., Cumberland County Schools in North Carolina, and the San Diego Unified School District.

The winner was chosen by a bipartisan jury of eight prominent leaders, including two former U.S. secretaries of education, a former senator and two former governors.

The Houston Independent School District earned the Broad Prize over the 75 urban school districts eligible to compete because it “outperformed peer districts in academic achievement” and “increased its graduation rate faster than other urban districts,” according to a Broad Foundation press release.

It is also cited for narrowing achievement gaps for low-income and Hispanic students, as well as improving college-readiness levels.

Houston’s win shows that some of the most innovative and effective work to drive student achievement is occurring in big-city school districts, according to Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

“Once again, HISD demonstrates to the nation their progress and experience in improving educational opportunities for all children,” Casserly pointed out.

Council Conference *continued from page 1*

to converge in New Mexico’s largest city. They’ll each receive tokens of appreciation representing the culture of the Land of Enchantment, as the state is called, from Albuquerque Public Schools, hosting the conference.

These gifts include embossed tin business card holders created by the students in Omlor’s classes as well as classes at three other APS middle schools.

Guests also will receive pottery shard magnets created by APS art teachers and New Mexico-themed postcards in the style of old Route 66 created by fourth graders in Jo Tabacchi’s art classes at Arroyo del Oso Elementary. The postcards offer “Greetings

from New Mexico” and are decorated with symbols of the state including the state bird – the roadrunner; the state flower – the yucca; even the state dinosaur – Coelophysis.

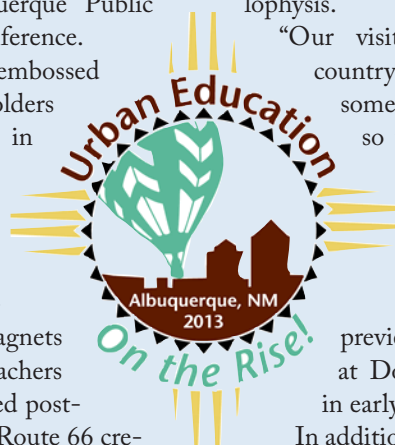
“Our visitors from around the country will be excited to get some of this beautiful artwork so that they can remember the great students of Albuquerque Public Schools,” says APS Superintendent Winston Brooks, who previewed student-made gifts at Double Eagle Elementary in early October.

In addition to the 3,000 takeaways created for conference guests, APS students and art teachers have created 350 New Mexico-themed centerpieces

that will adorn the tables at five meals during the conference.

The centerpieces will include Native American-style vases with corn husk arrangements, collagraph prints of New Mexico landmarks and hot air balloons with woven basket gondolas. Because the conference falls on Dia de Los Muertes (Day of the Dead), one set of centerpieces will feature calaveras (sugar skulls) sitting atop mirrors in embossed tin frames.

“All of these pieces are reminiscent of the folk art and traditions indigenous to New Mexico and the people who live here,” said project coordinator Janet Kahn, former APS fine arts director. She said while creating the artwork for the conference, students have learned about New Mexico history and culture as well as art, geometry, math, literature and other subjects.





Denise Link



David Percy



Lynn Rogers



Elona Street-Stewart



Airick Leonard West

'Urban Educator of the Year' Honors Go to...!

Five big-city school board members have been nominated for the nation's highest honor in urban education leadership.

Anticipation will fill the air on the evening of Oct. 31 at the Council of the Great City Schools' 24th Annual "Urban Educator of the Year" award banquet in Albuquerque, N.M.

The winner will receive the newly established Green-Garner Award, recognizing outstanding contributions in urban education and named in memory of urban school leaders Richard R. Green and Edward Garner.

The candidates for the award are school board members:

- Denise Link of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District;
- David Percy of the Albuquerque Public Schools;
- Lynn Rogers of the Wichita Public Schools;
- Elona Street-Stewart of Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools; and
- Airick Leonard West of Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools.

And now the time has come. Envelope, please! And the winner is....

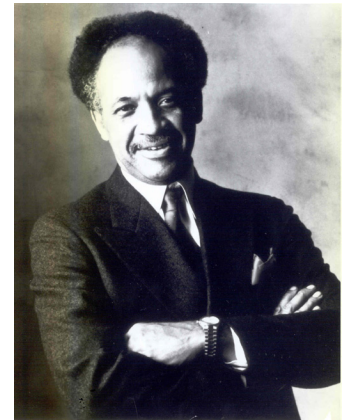
The announcement will be made at the banquet in conjunction with the Council's 57th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 30-Nov. 3, in Albuquerque.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK Education and Voyager Learning/Sopris Learning, the Green-Garner Award is the namesake of the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system and a businessman and former school board president of the Denver Public Schools, respectively.

Garner, who represented school board members on the Council's Executive Committee back in the early 1990s, played a key role in establishing and funding the Urban Educator of the Year award, known as the Richard R. Green Award for the past 23 years.

The award is presented to an urban-school superintendent and board member in alternative years. The winner receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a student.

Last year's awardee was Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson, who retired this past summer.



Richard Green



Edward Garner

Principal Supervisors Play Critical Role, Study Finds

School districts are increasingly relying on principal supervisors to ensure school principals are prepared to meet the growing demands of providing instructional leadership, according to a new study by the Council of the Great City Schools.

Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, *Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors* examines the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors in major school districts across the nation. The report looks specifically at the ways those in these pivotal “central office” leadership positions are selected, supported and evaluated.

“Staff in these new supervisor roles must now be equipped to identify, assess, and advance effective instruction,” the study notes. “And in the context of the Common Core State Standards {adopted in 45 states and the District of Columbia}, they must be ready to lead broad-based instructional change and reform.”

Principal supervisors often oversee large numbers of principals and still handle extensive administrative oversight responsibilities as vestiges of past structures or roles – and with diminished central office funding. They oversee an average of 24 schools each, according to survey results.

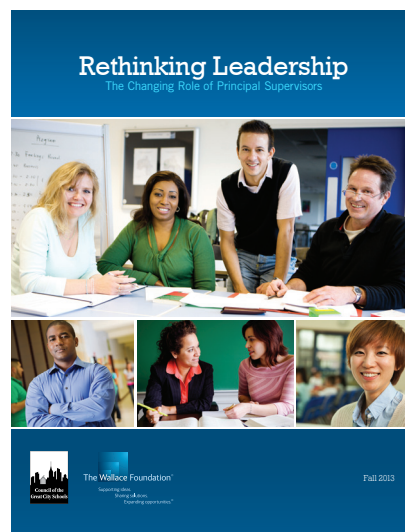
“Districts should think carefully about how the work of principal supervisors is connected to the district’s major reform initiatives and overall vision for change,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “In the context of the Common Core State Standards, for example, principal supervisors provide a critical link between central office leadership and resources and building-level personnel.”

Given their crucial role of supporting principals, principal supervisors should be well matched to the needs of the schools assigned to them. However, the study found that doesn’t always happen, and that districts most often group schools together and match them with principal supervisors geographically in order to facilitate school visits.

“This new, important report by the

Council of the Great City Schools sheds light on how school districts construct and support the position of principal supervisor,” says Jody Spiro, director of education leadership at The Wallace Foundation. “It’s clear that it will take much more than training to help these leaders become more effective.”

She explains, “Districts need to build systems that limit supervisors’ competing responsibilities and that do a better job matching supervisors with schools so they



can support all the principals they oversee.”

Although many principal supervisors were former school principals, many lack experience as a human resources, operations or central office instructional administrator. And they do not always have access to the kind of instructionally focused professional development they need to help strengthen school principals as instructional leaders of their schools.

The lack of experience is complicated by the fairly short tenure of principal supervisors in urban districts. The average amount of time they are in their positions is three years, suggesting that this position has been adapted or reinvented recently in many districts, or that the turnover in the position has been extensive.

The Council launched the two-part study in the fall of 2012 with a survey of

the Council’s 66 urban member districts, as well as two additional districts participating in The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative. This survey targeted staff currently serving as principal supervisors, asking them to provide details on their background, training, professional development, major job responsibilities, and how these responsibilities have changed over the past few years.

The survey was followed up by site visits to the six school districts participating in Wallace’s Principal Pipeline Initiative – North Carolina’s Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Denver Public Schools, Georgia’s Gwinnett County Public Schools, Florida’s Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, the New York City Department of Education, and Maryland’s Prince George’s County Public Schools.

Recommendations

The report includes recommendations to districts that want to build more effective principal supervisory systems. Districts should:

- Define and clearly communicate throughout the school system the role and required competencies of principal supervisors;
- Narrow principal supervisor responsibilities and spans of control facing them so that they can provide school principals with individualized support and oversight;
- Strategically select and deploy principal supervisors, matching skills and expertise to the need of schools;
- Provide principal supervisors with the professional development and training they need to assume new instructional leadership roles;
- Establish information-sharing policies or procedures to ensure clear lines of communication and collaboration between principal supervisors and central office staff;
- Provide early and sustained support to new principals in the form of coaches;
- Hold principals – and principal super-

Principal Supervisors continued on page 11

From Leading an Elementary School to Leading a School District

When Cindy Marten received a phone call in February from the San Diego Board of Education, she thought it was about participating on a search committee for the next superintendent to replace Bill Kowba, who was retiring in June. A principal at the district's Central Elementary, Marten had served on a superintendent search committee four years ago.

So she was shocked when she found out the real reason the board had called her: to offer her the position of superintendent.

"I didn't apply for the job, I had no career goal for it, no anticipation for it, no sights on a job like this," said Marten in an interview with the *Urban Educator*. "So to get this call out of the blue, saying we want you to be the next superintendent, was a big surprise."

In a span of four months, Marten went from overseeing a school with 1,000 students and a \$5 million budget to overseeing California's second largest school district with 132,489 students and a \$1.1 billion operating budget.

But the transition from elementary school principal to superintendent was made easier because she had the opportunity to work side-by-side with Kowba for four months before he left the district. She acknowledges her situation was rare because often times in urban school districts a new superintendent walks through the front door while the departing superintendent walks out the back door. "The most they might exchange is a hello and a goodbye and that's it," Marten recalls Kowba told her.

The four-month transition time also provided her with the opportunity to attend approximately 100 meetings with employees, parents, students and community groups. She said the amount of support she has received from the five-member school board, which unanimously chose her as superintendent, as well as the surrounding community has been tremendous.

"People want to be about continuing the vision of a quality school in every neighborhood," said Marten. "I guess I was seen as a principal who was doing that among



San Diego Schools Superintendent Cindy Marten talks with students during one of her weekly school visits.

others. So the board decided instead of looking outside, we have our answer here at home."

As principal of Central, she oversaw an increase in test scores at a school where 99 percent of students were from economically disadvantaged families and 85 percent were English language learners. She describes her leadership style as less top down and more community-based because the community knows best what their children need.

"I see my role as superintendent is support; how do I best support every school to realize its own mission and vision in creating rigor and relevance for every school every day."

Creating Quality Schools

When asked what the biggest challenge facing the San Diego school system, the former principal cites the lack of coherence across the school system.

"If you were to ask a teacher, principal or parents what's a quality school, you would get different answers," said Marten, "because I don't think we have agreement on what it means to be a high quality school and how to create that."

This school year the district will focus on implementing the Common Core State

Standards to provide students with a high level of rigor and critical thinking.

"I'm here to produce actively literate, contributing, participating members of society," said Marten. "If you are going to be all of these things, you have to know how to form an opinion, make an argument, read multiple texts; the promise of common core."

And while Marten says the work she is doing as superintendent is the same work she did as a principal, just on a much larger scale, the demands on her time are much greater. She works seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to 10 or 11 p.m. visiting three to four schools a week.

"It's a people-driven organization," said Marten. "There's a lot of people and a lot of work to do, and I'm happy to be able to do it."

To deal with the stressful demands of her position, the 47-year-old Marten practices photography, a hobby she started seven years ago when her husband, who she has been married to for 30 years, had a massive stroke. Marten had to help him recover while also parenting her then 13-year-old son and being principal to 1,000 students. So in an effort to find something that would "center" her, she started taking a photograph every single day. And what started as a way to help Marten take care of herself has turned into what she calls a daily gratitude practice.

Ten years ago, she left a high performing school district to teach at Central Elementary because she wanted to disprove the theory that one has to have a house in a great zip code to get a good public education.

"Why can't local neighborhood public schools be the best public schools in America?" asks Marten. "I'm about that, I'm about creating high quality urban public education."

And the opportunity to lead a school district with a team of people who believe in that same vision was the reason Marten said "yes" to that surprise phone call she received eight months ago.

National Distinguished Principals Announced



Sharon McNary

Sharon McNary, principal of Richland Elementary School in Tennessee's Shelby County Schools in Memphis, was recently inducted into the 2013 Class of

National Distinguished Principals by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

McNary has served as an educator in Memphis for the past 30 years, working the past 15 years as an assistant principal and principal of Richland Elementary.

She is one of 61 elementary and middle

school principals that will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. in late October. The annual awards ceremony honors principals for their demonstrations of exceptional leadership, gains in student achievement and fostering an environment of education excellence.

Additional big-city principals honored in the 2013 class include Janet Knott, Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla.; Karen Barnes, Baltimore City Public Schools; and Kelly Aramaki, Seattle Public Schools.

Established in 1984, the National Distinguished Principals program honors principals from across the nation in both public and private schools.

Eighth-Grader's Nonprofit Group Helps to Bridge Digital Divide

Franny Millen, an 8th grader in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, has raised \$40,000 and received more than 700 donated laptops through her nonprofit that is closing the digital divide in her community.

Eliminate the Digital Divide (E2D) nonprofit began when Millen realized several students in her classroom didn't have computers to research and type reports. She decided that all families should have access to digital technology in their homes and set about getting donations and support.

Although the 13-year-old was nervous at the start, she received early support from John Woods, the mayor of Davidson, N.C.

"Mayor John Woods was on board from the start," said Millen. "As we spoke with more and more people, they became aware of the issue and started to see how fixable the problem was. They got really excited and joined in to help us."

Local and national support has enabled E2D to provide families with laptops, bandwidth, training, technical support and



Franny Millen, right, a student at North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, passes out laptops to students as part of her nonprofit group she created.

education software. Eligible families are required to undergo basic computer training taught by students from Davidson College. Families contribute a small fee of \$10 a month for a year, while E2D subsidizes the balance of the overall computer package so families can own the laptops at the end of the year.

The nonprofit has secured enough funding to service two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. Millen initially set a goal to help 50 families, but has reached nearly 500 families with plans for expansion into neighboring cities.

Broward County District Wins Top Web Award

Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale recently received national recognition for its *Defining the Core* web site, which provides parents, teachers, staff and other school stakeholders with important information about the Common Core State Standards being implemented in the district.

The Center for Digital Education bestowed on the district the 2013 Best of the Web Award, one of two awards given to a school district and an institution of higher education, respectively.

On the *Defining the Core* web site – www.definingthecore.com – visitors have access to a variety of tools on the new education standards for literary and mathematics, including videos and parent guides from the Council of the Great City Schools.

National Academy Honors Educators

In 1998, David Pickler was elected as a school board member in Tennessee's Shelby County Schools in Memphis. For the past 15 years, he has advocated for school governance to advance public education on a local and national level.

In recognition of his efforts, Pickler recently received a 2013 Bammy Award in the school board category. Presented by The Academy of Education Arts & Sciences, the awards are designed to highlight the extraordinary work being done across the entire education field, from teachers, principals, superintendents and various other education professionals to parents, advocates and elected officials. This is the second year in a row Pickler has received a Bammy. In 2012, he received the Educator's Voice Award.

Two big-city educators also received

National Academy continued on page 9



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has a one-on-one conversation with a student in a back-to-school visit at an Albuquerque elementary school.

U.S. Education Secretary Praises Albuquerque School Reforms in Visit

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan praised reform efforts in a visit to an Albuquerque school last month when he launched his back-to-school bus tour in

National Academy continued from page 8

awards. Deven Black, teacher/librarian at New York City's Castle Hill Middle School, won in the school librarian category, and Jesse Hagopian, a high school history teacher in Seattle Public Schools, won in the Secondary School Teacher category.

The Academy presents two honors in every category – the Bammy Award and the Educator's Voice Award. Members of the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences International select the Bammy Awards honorees. The online education community determines who receives the Educator's Voice Award by voting on the Bammy Awards web site for nominated people.

In all, 34 awards were presented this year at a gala in Washington, D.C.

four states that began in New Mexico.

He visited Emerson Elementary School in Albuquerque to learn how Albuquerque Public Schools are turning around and improving low-achieving schools.

Emerson has been redesigned to focus on English language learners while new Common Core academic standards are being implemented.

"We are still tweaking what we are doing here, but we think we are making progress and will continue to work on the model with the hope of replicating it at other schools where students face the challenges of poverty and language," said Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks.

After touring the school, meeting with school officials, parents, students and community members, Secretary Duncan praised reform efforts at Emerson.

"We hear all the time that these are poor children, they can't learn," Duncan said in the *Albuquerque Journal*. "...We get that pushback from people who are skeptical. But it's not true."

Two Miami-Dade District Alumni Awarded Genius Grants

Karen Russell and Tarell McCraney have a lot in common. They are 1999 graduates of Miami-Dade County Public Schools and both are writers, Russell a fiction writer, and McCraney, a playwright. And now they have one more thing in common. They are among the 24 recipients of a 2013 MacArthur Fellowship.

The fellowship comes with a \$625,000 grant given over five years to individuals who are exceptionally creative with a track record of achievement and the potential for even more significant contributions in the future.

Russell is a graduate from Coral Gables High School, who has written several short



Karen Russell

stories and novels often about her native Florida. Her debut novel *Swamplandia!* was a finalist for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize and her short story *The Hox River Window* won the 2012 National Magazine Award for fiction.

McCraney is a graduate from the New



Tarell McCraney

World School of the Arts whose plays have been performed in major theaters in the United States and Britain. As a student in the playwriting program at the Yale School of Drama, he wrote his most well-known

work, a trilogy titled *The Brother/Sister Plays*. McCraney also works to bring theatre to elementary and secondary students

Genius Grants continued on page 12

Grand Budget Bargain – One Way Out of the Manufactured Crises

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

Once again, the nation is being subjected to a politically-manufactured federal budget crisis. This time the deadlock has resulted in a federal government shut-down over Affordable Care Act funding, and we appear to be on the brink of a federal debt default.

In recent years, these scenarios have become almost routine. In fiscal year 2011, eight short-term continuing resolutions (CRs) were needed to keep the government in operation and only an eleventh-hour deal on the debt ceiling prevented default. The final CR resulted in budget cuts to numerous programs and the elimination of others, including dozens of small education grant programs. And, the debt ceiling deal resulted in passage of the Budget Control Act (BCA) that had 10-year budget caps and a sequestration process that threatened to become the “new normal” in federal funding. Republicans claimed they won this fight.

Still, each budget battle has its unique features, leverage points, politics, and strategies. The dynamic this year appears to be that Congress and the Administration are willing to go over any “budgetary cliff” in sight and then scramble back from their irresponsibility, retroactively. The major “fiscal cliff” deal passed on January 1, 2013, for instance, eliminated a number of expiring Bush-era tax cuts and required the retroactive reinstatement of others. The tax bill also included a short-term delay in sequestration and a temporary suspension of the federal debt ceiling. The Administration and the Democrats claimed they got the better of this deal.

However, two months later on March 1, federal discretionary funding and non-exempt entitlement spending went over the “sequestration cliff” with little fanfare, resulting in a 5 percent cut in domestic programs and 8 percent in defense discretionary programs. On July 1, Congress then allowed the federal college student loan program to go over the “interest rate cliff” before reaching another retroactive deal weeks later. Going over one cliff or another and then trying to climb back to the top became the rule in 2013. Now we are looking at a breach of the federal debt ceiling.

Unfortunately, securing even short-term budget deals by pulling back from the brink seems to be increasingly difficult with each new manufactured deadline. This raises the obvious question of whether a long-term “Grand Budget Bargain” could be any tougher than the increasingly grueling temporary continuing resolutions or debt ceiling battles. Following the August



2011 Budget Control Act, there was a fiscal respite through the end of 2012 when the tax, sequestration, and debt ceiling deadlines came due. Might a Grand Budget Bargain normalize the process of financing our federal activities and provide a multi-year breather from these constant crises?

The difficulty of reaching a long-term, comprehensive budget deal cannot be overstated. A snapshot of the current \$3.6 trillion federal budget underscores the challenge. Some 60 percent of the federal budget is comprised of entitlement and mandatory spending, while another 34 percent are annual discretionary appropriations (17 percent in defense and 16 percent in domestic spending). The remaining 6 percent is interest on the federal debt. Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare alone account for 43 percent of the budget and is growing. The other 17 percent of entitlement and mandatory expenditures include sizeable programs like unemployment compensation, food stamps, college student aid, and farm subsidies. In addition, many tax preferences in the federal code are equally inviolable to one interest group or another. A mega-deal would have to address the sacrosanct entitlement sector and the tax code if it had any hope of succeeding on a bipartisan and long-term basis.

From an education standpoint, school programs have been cut in nearly every budget deal of recent years. And, with all elementary and secondary education grant programs operating under annual discretionary appropriations, these school programs are subject to automatic annual sequestrations. Education programs, like other domestic discretionary programs, are being squeezed out of the federal budget in order to maintain tax preferences, make interest payments on the growing national debt, and fund an unsustainable growth rate in entitlement programs. Could a big-picture agreement treat us any worse, or would it create room for needed education investments?

There is little doubt that a mega-budget deal will meet with significant political opposition from all camps, and it would require both statesmanship and bipartisanship. At this stage, however, even short-term budget deals necessitate painful concessions that both sides seem unwilling to make. Expecting statesmanship and political altruism in these short-term crises seems unrealistic, but they might be possible once a decade. Can a Grand Budget Bargain really be that much more painful than falling off the nearest budget cliff each month?



Buffalo Schools Superintendent Pamela Brown, fourth from right, congratulates Houghton Academy teacher Keith Wiley, center, and students for winning the district's middle school math competition.

Former Investment Banker Inspires Buffalo Students to Excel in Math

The underdog crew of eighth-graders from Buffalo's Houghton Academy last March won the 2013 Buffalo City Schools Middle School Math League competition with determination and one dedicated math teacher and coach -- Keith Wiley.

With an 85 percent poverty rate and a 45 percent minority population, Houghton Academy challenged the reigning champs at City Honors, an elite high school with high admissions standards, and won. In the past five years, City Honors has been the only school in the district to win the competition, according to the *Buffalo News*, which ran a recent profile of Wiley.

Preparing Houghton's math champions began in the classroom, with a math teacher who found his calling late in life. Wiley is a former investment banker, who at age 46, approached the Buffalo school district's math director about starting an after-school math tutoring program. There was no money for such a program, but the district was in desperate need of math instructors and hired Wiley to teach math at Houghton Academy in 2000, where he has been teaching ever since.

Wiley has an engaging teaching style, creating stories to explain a math problem, or breaking out into song. He dedicates his lunch and afterschool time to tutor students who are falling behind. Last year, his entire Math League team sat for the ninth-

grade Regents algebra exam and passed.

Before these students met Wiley, most of them struggled in math such as Rico Smalls, who was two years behind grade level when he entered Wiley's class.

Smalls was a disruptive student but Wiley talked with him and worked with him on his math skills.

Smalls eventually finished with the second-highest scores in the Middle School Math League competition and, now 16 and a freshman, he is doing well in school and expected to graduate with his class.

Principal Supervisors *continued from page 6*

visors – accountable for the progress of schools, and ensure alignment in the processes and measures used to assess teacher, principal, and principal supervisor performance;

- Provide clear, timely, and actionable evaluation data to principals; and
- Commit district resources and engage external partners in the process of developing future school and district leaders.

The report concludes that districts need to build systems wherein the processes for selecting, deploying, supporting, and evaluating principal supervisors each work in tandem to strengthen the role of these critical staff members in schools and in the district.

Miami-Dade Launches Initiative to Create Safer Schools

Miami-Dade County Public Schools recently unveiled a plan to increase school safety in and around schools.

Under the plan, the district's police department will build relationships with students and parents and conduct awareness campaigns through law-related education and student presentations.

The plan calls for:

- Adding more school resource officers to secondary schools to include middle and K-8 centers;
- Working with the Department of Children and Families regarding cases where weapons entered into school sites;
- Continuing a random metal detection program;
- Participating in and promoting the Miami-Dade Police Gun Bounty Program;
- Assigning a detective part-time to Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to track and investigate the source of firearm incidents;
- Working with local, state, and federal agencies to prevent weapons and drugs from getting onto the school sites; and
- Encouraging an anonymous tip reporting hotline as well as Crime Stoppers, which recently introduced a new mobile phone application.

This immediate call to action to curb school violence is being led by Miami Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho. As he announced the initiative, he spoke of young Miami-Dade students who had been killed by gun violence on the streets near district schools.

"One gun in the streets of Miami is too many," Carvalho was quoted in an article on Miami.CBSLocal.com. "One gun in school is one gun too many."



Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 702
Washington DC 20004

PRESORT
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT NO. 2333

Broward CFO Wins Council Award

I. Benjamin Leong, the chief financial officer for Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, was recently presented the Bill Wise Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief Financial Officers Conference in Dallas.

Sponsored by Chartwells School Dining Services/Thompson Hospitality, the annual award recognizes a school business official who exhibits professionalism, integrity and outstanding service to urban education.

Leong joined the Broward school district as director of management/facility audits in 1995. In July 2000, the superintendent assigned him the duties of chief financial officer; and in July 2004, his title was officially changed to chief financial officer.

Prior to joining Broward, Leong was the special assistant to the chancellor of New York City public schools for financial affairs, where he oversaw a \$7.2 billion budget and supervised business operations.

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



I. Benjamin Leong, chief financial officer for Florida's Broward County Public Schools, is the winner of the 2013 Bill Wise Award.

Genius Grants continued from page 9

in Miami, often giving free performances of his works for student audiences.

Since 1981, 871 people in fields such as science, art and literature have been selected as MacArthur Fellows. Recipients are selected by an independent selection committee and between 20 to 30 Fellows are selected each year.

Great City Grads



Barbara Jenkins

**Orange County Public Schools
(Orlando) Superintendent**

1979 graduate

Winter Park High School

Orange County Public Schools