



urban Educator

The Nation's Voice for Urban Education

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Las Vegas Mayor Goodman



Clark County Superintendent Garcia



CNN reporter Maria Hinojosa

Progress and Challenges In Urban Education to Be Discussed

“Public Education, Your Best Bet!”

professional development; and bilingual education.

That’s the theme of the Council of the Great City Schools’ 48th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 20-24, in Las Vegas, drawing nearly a thousand urban school leaders to convene in discussions focusing on progress, challenges and issues in the nation’s big-city school systems.

With studies showing that urban school leaders are optimistic about the future of public education in the big cities, educators are discussing student achievement gaps; leadership, governance and management; finance; pro-



The pinnacle event of the conference will be what is considered the first-ever national town hall meeting on “How Urban School Superintendents and Mayors

Make Their Relationship Work.”

Moderated by CNN correspondent Maria Hinojosa, the 90-minute program on Oct. 22 will center on how city and school leaders work together for the good of the community.

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Council Weighs In On Funding Battle

The Council of the Great City Schools has filed another *amicus*, or “friend of the court,” brief in the continuing legal dispute between the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and the State of New York on what constitutes adequate funding to New York City schoolchildren.



Last year, the Council filed a similar legal brief before the Empire State’s highest court, the Court of Appeals, which charged the state legislature to devise a funding solution in a year, a deadline which has now passed.

In analyses conducted to determine how much funding is necessary to provide a sound basic education to New York City students, the plaintiffs recommended a funding increase of \$5.6 billion over current state expenditures. Their figure was based on a costing-out study conducted by the American Institutes for Research and Management Analysis and Planning, Inc.

However, the governor proposed a \$4.3 billion increase in total aid to the city in 2009-2010 dollars. The governor’s proposal was based in part on an analysis by Standard and Poor’s School Evaluation Services.

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A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 64 of the nation's largest urban public school districts

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Council to Release Report On Title III Bilingual Provision

The number of urban public school students whose native language was not English increased by more than 10 percent between 1998-99 and 2000-01 alone, according to a new study by the Council of the Great City Schools.

This month, the Council is releasing a report on how urban districts are using federal funds to improve English proficiency and the academic performance of English language learners (ELLs).

Title III of No Child Left Behind: A Status Report from the Great City Schools presents results from a survey of bilingual education directors in 47 urban school districts to find out how urban educators are implementing Title III, which funds programs and services for ELLs and is part of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The report reveals that under NCLB, funding for bilingual education was significantly increased for urban districts, who serve about 1.1 million students with Title III funds.

Funding increased from \$113 million in 2002 to \$129 million in 2003 and the average big-city school system received \$109.90 in Title III funds per English language learner.

District administrators were asked to explain how they were spending their Title III funds to supplement their own programs and services to ELLs.

According to the report, urban districts spent 25.3 percent of their Title III funding to hire and retain staff, while 24.1 percent was spent on professional development and 17.1 percent on instructional materials.

Districts also used funding to provide extra instructional assistance to ELLs, parent outreach and support, translators, assessment tools and technology acquisition and training.

While Title III is too new to expect any concrete results, 80 percent of the districts surveyed expect the funds to help increase the rate at which students become English proficient. Respondents also believe the funds will lead to a lower dropout rate among ELL students, and test scores will improve.

In addition, a number of districts plan to use the Title III funds to increase ELL participation in Advanced Placement classes and increase the number of ELL students in gifted and talented classes.

"The Council of the Great City Schools and its member districts are closely monitoring programs and initiatives in the nation's major cities for signs of progress among English language learners," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council. "These efforts and others will be critical to the ability of the nation's urban school systems to determine what is working and to ensure that every English language learner achieves to his or her full potential."

Funding Need Argued in Nashville

Calling on Tennesseans to take a common sense approach to funding urban and rural school systems, Lisa Hunt, a member of the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education, recently recommended changes to the state's school funding system.

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Funding Battle....

"The Council commends the plaintiffs and the defendants for agreeing, through their respective studies, that the city's schools are in desperate need of increased funding to meet the constitutional mandate," says the *amicus* brief.

"The Council's research on city schools supports a remedy on the high end of the range — \$4.3 to \$5.6 billion per year — proposed by the two parties," the brief notes.

To determine how much additional funding is necessary, the Council employed a standards-based or output-oriented approach. "This measurement of financial adequacy was based on the resources available to the highest performing (not the highest spending) school districts in New York State and then adjusted for the needs of the city's students," the brief explains.

The Council urges the court-appointed panel of special referees to recommend a funding increase annually that is at least equivalent to the plaintiff's proposal.

Texas School Funding System Deemed Unconstitutional

The method that the state of Texas uses to fund its schools was recently ruled "unconstitutional" by a state district judge.

Judge John Dietz declared that the \$30 billion school finance system violated the Texas Constitution because it failed to provide an adequate and suitable education for the state's schoolchildren.

More than 300 school districts, including those in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston, joined a lawsuit against the state over its finance system to fund schools.

According to the *Houston Chronicle*, the funding system known as "Robin Hood" requires 13 percent of the state's 1,037 districts to share a portion of their property tax revenue with less wealthy districts.

In his ruling, Dietz also sided with school districts who argue that they are forced to charge the maximum local property tax rate allowed under state law—\$1.50 per \$100 in property value—and, therefore, have lost "all meaningful discretion" in setting local property tax rates for their districts.

The judge also found that under the current school funding formula districts cannot meet academic requirements that stem from the state's accreditation, accountability and student assessment programs.

Dietz gave the state one year to devise a new equitable school funding plan and told lawmakers he would halt state funding if a solution was not reached.

During the 26-day trial, Pat Forgiione, the superintendent of the Austin Independent School District, testified for seven hours as the plaintiffs' lead witness.

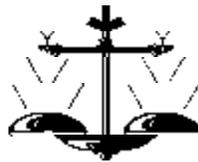
"The decision gives us hope," said Forgiione in a news statement after the ruling. "... Hope in the Texas Legislature to do the right thing based on this judge's decision; and hope that this decision will hasten the end of the achievement gaps and school dropouts."

Houston school officials said that under the current school finance system the district has cut its budget nearly \$100 million in the past four years as revenue from the state has declined.

In a news statement following the ruling, Houston Interim Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra said, "Clearly, the Texas system of school finance is broken and must be fixed. We urge the legislature now to seize the moment, throw out our antiquated system and develop a new funding plan that will give Texas children the kind of education they deserve."

Dallas Interim Superintendent Larry Groppe said the current finance system is failing Texas public schools and called the ruling an important step on behalf of Texas schoolchildren. But in a press release, he said much remains to be done to fix the state's public school finance system.

"This ruling will help in the long run, but all Texas school districts need for the legislature to solve this predicament in 2005," he stressed.





Harry Wong



Carol Moseley Braun



Tavis Smiley

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Nashville....

“Our state currently ranks 48th in per pupil spending, and that should be an embarrassment for every resident,” she said as a representative of Tennessee’s Urban Schools Caucus, which met in late September with the Tennessee Basic Education Program (BEP) Review Committee in the state’s capital city.

“While some may believe there’s an abundance of cash in the larger counties and public school systems, that’s just not the case,” said Pedro Garcia, who heads the Nashville school system.

“In Nashville, we’re dealing with an unprecedented number of students who don’t speak English and must have a second-language teacher,” he emphasized in a press release. “We have a high concentration of poverty that comes from people moving to larger cities looking for work.”

And he indicated that there’s a high percentage of special-education students. “With ongoing needs to improve many aging buildings and add new ones, we’re stretched thin in Nashville,” stressed Director of Schools Garcia.

Presenting six recommendations to change the state’s funding system, Hunt said, “The BEP Fiscal Capacity formula should accurately reflect the true costs and market conditions of urban districts. The current cost differential factor is inadequate for this purpose and should be revised.”

The Urban Schools Caucus in Tennessee includes representatives from Nashville, Memphis, Chattanooga, Knoxville and Shelby County.

Continued from page 1

Progress and Challenges....

In cooperation with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the program will feature:

- Mayor Oscar Goodman of Las Vegas along with Clark County School District Superintendent Carlos Garcia, and



Mayor Kelly



Superintendent Harvey

- Mayor Randy Kelly of St. Paul, Minn., and St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Patricia Harvey.



Chaka Khan

Also at the conference, the nation’s urban school leader of the year will be

announced at the Richard R. Green Award Banquet on Oct. 21. Entertainment will be provided by noted singer and songwriter Chaka Khan.

Moreover, the five-day convention, hosted by the Clark County School District, will feature:

- Motivational speaker Harry Wong (Oct. 21 lunch);



- Former U.S. senator and ambassador Carol Moseley Braun (Oct. 22 breakfast); and
- Talk show host Tavis Smiley (Oct. 22 lunch).

Next year’s Council Fall Conference will be in Atlanta, hosted by the city school system.

The Council will celebrate its 50th anniversary at its Fall Conference in San Diego in 2006.

Drum Role, Please! For the Urban School Leader of 2004

Who will be the urban school leader of the year?

With 17 candidates, one of the nation's big-city school district superintendents will step forward as the winner of the Richard R. Green Award at a banquet on Oct. 21 as part of the Council of the Great City Schools' 48th Annual Fall Conference in Las Vegas.

The award is the nation's highest urban education leadership honor, and named for the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, who had also been superintendent of the Minneapolis school district.

The Green awardee receives a \$10,000 college scholarship from the ARAMARK company to present to a senior in a high school from the winner's school system, or from the high school from which the winner graduated.

Drum role, please, for one of this year's nominees:

- Alan Bersin, San Diego Unified School District
- Carol Comeau, Anchorage School District
- Marion Canedo, Buffalo City Public Schools
- Pascal Forgione Jr., Austin Independent School District
- Carlos Garcia, Clark County Public Schools in Las Vegas

- Beverly Hall, Atlanta Public Schools
- Patricia Harvey, St. Paul Public Schools
- Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Richmond Public Schools
- Arthur Johnson, Palm Beach County Schools
- Percy Mack, Dayton Public Schools
- Thomas Payzant, Boston Public Schools
- Duncan Pritchett, Indianapolis Public Schools
- James Pughsley, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Roy Romer, Los Angeles Unified School District
- Christopher Steinhauser, Long Beach Unified School District
- John Thompson, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Paul Vallas, School District of Philadelphia

Last year, Superintendent Franklin Till of Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale shared the honor with North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board member Arthur Griffin.

The Green Award now rotates annually between superintendents and school board members.

Students, Parents Can Vote In Mock Election

Inner-city students will be able to cast their votes for who they believe should be the next president of the United States in the National Student/Parent Mock Election being held this month.

They will join students across the nation who will get the opportunity to cast their votes for president, senators, congresspersons and, in states that are having a gubernatorial election, governors. Parents will also have the opportunity to participate in the mock election, which takes place on October 28, a week before the nation goes to the polls.

Mock election voters will also be voting on four national issues: homeland security/war on terror, the economy, education and health care.

All 50 states will have an elections headquarters and the votes will be collected by New Jersey's Office of the Attorney General. In an effort to encourage enrollment in the mock election, ABC-TV will air public service announcements and *USA TODAY* will develop instructional resources online for educators.

In addition, 200 schools will participate in specifically developed instructional resources by using *USA TODAY* in their classrooms to follow the issues of the campaign.

The National Student/Parent Mock Election is the nation's largest and most successful voter education project. In the last two presidential elections, more than 10 million students and parents cast their votes.

Also sponsoring the mock election are Pearson Education, an educational

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District Launches Online School In Louisville

Many high school students in Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville get an early start on college by enrolling in dual credit learning programs. But now the district has made it even easier for students to start their college careers by offering courses through the Internet.

The school system recently unveiled a new online school, "College NOW! eLearning Partnership," to enable students to earn dual credit through the Internet. The school was created as a result of a partnership among the Jefferson County school district, Jefferson Community and Technical College and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS).

The online school offers 11 dual credit courses covering humanities, English, history, computer applications, college algebra and trigonometry, and more courses are planned.

Students receive college credit through the KCTCS and also receive reduced tuition. A three-hour community college course normally costs \$276, but participants in the virtual school program receive savings of \$100 or more.

Superintendent Stephen Daeschner believes the school offers a great opportunity for students to succeed. "Imagine the possibilities!" said Daeschner. "Students who take advantage of the eLearning Partnership could earn enough credits to begin their postsecondary education as college sophomores."

In order to participate in the program, students must meet a required minimum ACT score and be approved by their high school principal or counselor.

Urban Districts Report Increases In SAT Participation and Scores

Oregon's Portland Public Schools not only posted improved scores on the SAT, but also managed to increase the number of students taking the college entrance exam administered by the College Board.

On the math portion of the test, students scored 529, an increase by four points over last year's score. On the verbal test, students posted a 526, an increase of eight points over last year's score.

Portland students combined scores on the SAT were 1055, surpassing the national average of 1,026.

The district also had 52 percent of its students take the college entrance exam this year, an increase of 110 students from the previous year.

"The results show that students in Portland Public Schools are graduating prepared to go to college or other post-graduation opportunities," said Julia Brim-Edwards, co-chair of the Portland school board.

Seattle

Students in Seattle Public Schools also continue to surpass the state and national average and increase the number of students taking the exam.

The district's combined score of 1066 was 40 points above the national average and seven points above the state average.

Participation on the exam is also at a ten-year high, with an estimated 55 percent of graduating seniors tak-

ing the SAT, compared to 53.6 percent last year.

Greensboro

The Guilford County School District in Greensboro, N.C., also had good news concerning the SAT. Its 2004 scores on the exam were the highest in the history of the district.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

The district's average total SAT score increased by 14 points to 1011, with verbal scores jumping by nine points to 503, and the math scores increasing by five points to 508.

State Test Gains

The 2004-2005 school year began with a number of the nation's urban school districts reporting improvement on state-mandated tests. Now, five more big-city school systems recently announced test-score gains.

In **Boston**, students improved in almost every subject and every grade, with the performance of African American and Hispanic students outpacing their white and Asian classmates. Says Superintendent Thomas Payzant, "We are starting to see what type of improvement can be realized when all students are supported and held to the same standard."

In **Baltimore**, high school scores rose in all content areas, with the most significant increase in English.

Also, fourth and eighth graders in **New York City, Rochester and Buffalo** public schools achieved gains on the annual New York State mathematics exams.

NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools Announced

Claxton Elementary School in Greensboro, N.C., had 94.5 percent of its students score above the proficient level on a state-mandated exam, while Ohio's Toledo Technology Academy received the highest rating given by the state Department of Education on the school's 2004 local report card.

And now these schools have something else to be proud of: they were among the 250 schools recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools of 2004.

The Blue Ribbon Schools program recognizes elementary and high schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap or whose students achieve at very high levels.

Big-city schools in Anchorage, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Indianapolis, Greensboro, Houston, Detroit, St. Louis, Newark, Cleveland, Toledo, Oklahoma City, Memphis, Milwaukee, Fort Worth, San Francisco, Shreveport, Austin and Washington, D.C., were named Blue Ribbon Schools.

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige congratulated the *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Schools for their achievements. "No Child Left Behind is starting to generate some amazing results, transforming the educational landscape," said Paige.

Public schools were selected as Blue Ribbon schools based on one of

two categories:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improved student perfor-



(From left to right) Claxton Elementary Principal Judy Jones, Guilford County Superintendent Terry Grier and Shadybrook Elementary Principal Linda Collie are congratulated by Nina Rees of the U.S. Department of Education for their schools being designated as Blue Ribbon Schools.

mance on state tests, as determined by the state school chief; and

- Schools whose students achieve in the top 10 percent on state tests.

Milwaukee, St. Louis and North Carolina's Guilford County school districts each had two schools recognized as Blue Ribbon schools, while Washington, D.C., had three Blue Ribbon schools: Bernard T. Janney Elementary School, Lafayette Elementary School and Langdon Elementary School.

Several states are still providing data to the Education Department to evaluate for determination if their schools qualify as Blue Ribbon.

DA's Office, Philly District Create Program

Middle school students in the School District of Philadelphia will learn the ins and outs of the criminal justice system as a result of a new curriculum developed by the school district and the city's district attorney's office.

The purpose of the juvenile justice/criminal justice curriculum is to educate students about the justice system as well as prevent them from participating in criminal conduct.

The classes are designed for students in grades 6, 7 and 8 and will be held once a week for a 45-minute period. The DA's office has created two study guides for the curriculum--one for teachers and one for students.

In addition to teaching students about the criminal justice system, they will also learn basic legal concepts, such as probable cause, search and seizure and federal drug penalties. The curriculum will also cover victim awareness issues such as the impact of gun violence and auto theft.

The subject matter will be taught through traditional lectures, mock trials, guest speakers, and video and panel discussions, and students are encouraged to explore the relevance of crime and to consider ways to avoid involvement.

"This curriculum is crime prevention through education," said DA Lynne Abraham. "It is my hope that once students realize that there are serious consequences to criminal conduct, they will make good choices for themselves and lead their peers into making good choices for their lives, too."

Dayton Reading Program Shows Promising Results

In 2002, Ohio's Dayton Public Schools started a reform effort to boost student achievement in literacy. Two years later, the program has proven to be a success with students posting improved test scores.

A number of steps were taken by district officials to improve literacy, such as restructuring the school day to provide every student with 2.5 hours of daily classroom instruction in reading and writing.

Literacy coaches were added to all elementary schools to work with teachers, and the district instituted daily 2.5 hour literacy blocks.

Also, school media centers were opened full time to give students greater access to reading materials, and schools adopted book clubs to encourage students to read 25 books or more during the school year.

Dayton Schools Superintendent Percy Mack created a Book Barrel Campaign in which students received new and used books donated by corporate and individual donors who filled barrels at work sites around the city.

In addition, the superintendent also challenged students to read for 150 hours over the summer and provided logs for students to keep track of their time spent reading.

Moreover, city officials participated in the reading effort. Dayton Mayor Rhine McLin issued certificates at city commission meetings to students who met her challenge to read 75 books during the school year. And be-



Dayton Superintendent Percy Mack reads to students at McNary Elementary School.

cause so many students met the challenge by the second year, certificates of recognition were sent to the schools to hand out to students.

"Success lies in the rate of growth educators are seeing take place." -- Superintendent Mack

Contributing to Dayton's reading initiative are reform recommendations made by the Council of the Great City

Schools to help the Dayton school district boost reading performance.

All of these efforts paid off for students in the district as evidenced by results on last year's Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT). Reading gains made by fourth and sixth graders on the test were the largest single year's growth achieved by the district since the state exam was introduced in 1995.

Third-grade students also made gains with a 28-percentage point increase on the Third Grade Reading Achievement Test. This was a 31 percent greater increase than the state as a whole.

"Success lies in the rate of growth educators are seeing take place—especially among elementary students," said Superintendent Mack. "Our teachers are taking students who are achieving at the bottom to becoming proficient in most academic areas."

Palm Beach Students Receive Hurricane Relief

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne, Office Depot, the office supply company, donated school supplies that are helping hundreds of Florida's Palm Beach County students return to school ready to learn, according to the district.

Many parents and students lost their belongings during the two hurricanes that slammed into Florida's east coast of the four recent hurricanes that swept across the Sunshine State.

"Many of our students need help with supplies," says school district Chief Academic Officer Ann Killets.

\$1.6 Million Grant Helps Memphis Hire Teachers

The Memphis City Schools has received a boost in recruiting and retaining top-notch teachers thanks to a \$1.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

U.S. Assistant Deputy Secretary of Education Nina Rees late last month announced at a Memphis middle school that the school district has been chosen along with Cleveland as two pilot cities in the country for the Department of Education-sponsored Urban Teacher Hiring Initiative.

The grant will allow the New Teacher Project, a nonprofit organization formed to address issues related to teacher shortages and teacher quality in the nation, to help the Memphis district hire and retain highly qualified teachers.

"We cannot have successful schools without great teachers," said Memphis Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson in a press release.

The New Teacher Project is the second major reform initiative launched in the Memphis City Schools this year. In February, Memphis was selected to join New York, Washington and Chicago by New Leaders for New Schools, which will train 60 new principals.

"Memphis has all the ingredients in place for success," said Rees, assistant deputy education secretary for innovation and improvement. "The New Teacher Project will add momentum to the initiatives underway and provide Memphis City Schools with a critical tool for improving its schools and closing the achievement gap – in line with the vision of the No Child Left Behind Act."

The district was awarded the grant after Michelle Rhee, CEO of the New Teacher Project, and others decided that Memphis would be the urban school district that could most benefit from the organization's help, and would be able to serve as a model for the project in the future.

"What impressed us most about Memphis is that it has assembled a team of school and community leaders who refuse to accept failure," Rhee stressed.

A new system for attracting and retaining top teachers will be developed in the three-year program.

"Sometimes, the Human Resources Department is blamed, when, in reality, there are many functions that go into a hiring process," says Superintendent Johnson. "With this funding, we will get help on the fiscal and accounting end, as well as with things like anticipated enrollment to see how many teachers we need to hire each year. It's much more comprehensive than just Human Resources."

"We cannot have successful schools without great teachers." -- Superintendent Johnson

NYC District Creates Unit for Non-English

A recent survey conducted by the New York City school district found that in 43 percent of student homes the primary language spoken is not English.

In an effort to fully involve these parents in their children's education, the nation's largest school system has created a new Translation and Interpretation Unit.

The new unit is designed to increase and improve the information available to parents and provide translation and face-to-face interpretation services at large school district events.

"New Yorkers and their children speak hundreds of languages and dialects," said Joel Klein, New York's school chancellor. "We are committed to bridging the language gap and giving parents the tools they need to do the best possible job of monitoring and guiding their children in our schools and communities."

The unit will translate documents into Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian Creole, Korean, Urdu and Arabic. These are the languages spoken most widely by the district's non-English speaking families.

The new unit will be headed by Kleber Palma, who previously served as translation unit director for the nation's second largest school system, the Los Angeles Unified School District.

"The importance of parent participation in our children's education cannot be emphasized enough," said Palma. "I look forward to eliminating the language barrier that stands in the way of parental involvement."

108th Congress Coming Up Short On K-12 Education Funding

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

As the 108th Congress prepares to close shop until after the Nov. 2 elections, nine of 13 annual appropriation bills remain unfinished, including fiscal year 2005 funding for the U.S. Department of Education and the programs it runs. And the outlook for increased school funding when Congress does get around to it is not promising.

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 5006, the Labor, Health and Human Service, and Education Appropriations bill, recently by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 388 to 13, but with disappointing education funding levels.

Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) each received an extra billion in support, but most other key education programs were frozen or cut.

The Title II (Teacher Quality) program, the Title III (English Language Acquisition) program, the Title IV (Safe and Drug Free Schools) program, the 21st Century After-School program, and many others were basically frozen for a second consecutive year.

Educational Technology grants were cut by \$91 million; Smaller Learning Communities grants were cut by \$72 million; and Comprehensive School Reform was cut by \$153 million. The Title V (Innovative Strategies) program, formally Chapter 2, has been virtually eliminated with a proposed \$276 mil-

lion cut.

The \$119 million Traditional American History program and the \$280 million Fund for Improvement of Education have been eliminated, along with a score of other smaller programs, ranging from Dropout Prevention to Parent Assistance Centers.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has reported a companion bill, S. 2810, with higher K-12 funding levels.

Title I and IDEA increases each exceed \$1.1 billion and programs scheduled for elimination in the House

bill were largely restored by the Senate.

Nonetheless, the \$296 million Title V (Innovative Strategies) program, the \$280 million Fund for Improvement of Education, and the \$226 million Even Start program are eliminated in the Senate bill.

Other key *No Child Left Behind* programs that were frozen in the House bill are also frozen or will receive very small increases in the Senate bill.

While the Senate Committee nearly doubles the FY05 funding increase for K-12 programs from the House levels, the increases in the federal elementary and secondary education investment pale in comparison to the increases approved in the 106th and 107th Congresses.

The 106th Congress increased K-12 education funding during its two sessions by \$6.5 billion. And the 107th Congress increased K-12 education funding during its two sessions by \$6.9 billion.

By contrast, the 108th Congress over its two sessions is likely to increase K-12 education funding by only \$3 billion if it follows the House recommendations and by only \$4 billion if it follows the Senate.

In short, the 108th Congress is coming up short on K-12 education funding. The "lame duck" session in late November provides an opportunity for the 108th Congress to resurrect education as a true priority. But will they take it?

LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

Great City Grads



Aric J. Barr
 U.S. Marine Lance Cpl.
Died in Iraq on April 3, 2004
 1999 graduate
 South Vo-Tech High School
 Pittsburgh Public Schools
 Inducted into the Pittsburgh Public
 Schools Alumni Stars Hall of Fame

Minneapolis District Launches Alternative Teacher Pay Program

In an effort to attract, retain and encourage talented people to enter the teaching profession, Minneapolis Public Schools will participate in an alternative teacher compensation program.

The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) will enable teachers who meet professional development goals and increase their students' academic achievement to receive additional compensation.



(left to right) Minneapolis Superintendent Thandiwe Peebles and Minnesota Education Commissioner Alice Seagren listen as Gov. Tim Pawlenty announces the TAP program.

Teachers at three K-8 schools voted to participate in the program and the district will receive \$2.6 million from the Minnesota Department of Education to fund their participation.

"We are excited to be the first urban school district in Minnesota to participate in TAP and to pilot a program that ties student achievement gains and applied staff development to additional teacher compensation," said Minneapolis Superintendent Thandiwe Peebles. "Working together, we will use TAP as one way to continuously improve student achievement."

The research-based TAP was designed by the Milken Family Foundation, an organization that works to strengthen the teaching profession. Under the TAP system, good teachers can earn higher salaries and advance professionally, without leaving the classroom, where they are often needed the

most. At the same time, the program provides opportunities for teachers to learn better teaching strategies and by holding them accountable for their performance.

The program will also be implemented in Minnesota's Waseca school district.

The Minnesota Department of Education will evaluate the effectiveness of TAP in Minneapolis, and results from the evaluation will help guide policymakers develop alternative teacher compensation programs at schools across the state.

Clark County Schools Rewarded

The Clark County School District in Las Vegas recently awarded a total of \$165,500 to 136 of its schools in rebates ranging from \$250 to \$5,000 for cutting energy use by a minimum of 10 to 15 percent in the district's Energy Conservation Program.

"Our energy conservation program produced \$3.8 million in cost avoidance," stressed Dale Scott, the school district's energy manager.

Principal Suzzie Bragg of Goldfarb Elementary School received a \$1,000 rebate. "We're going to put the money right back into instruction," she said.

Math Program Contributes to Philly Progress

It appears that urban school administrators who are meeting the challenges of the federal No Child Left Behind Act are providing their schools with a comprehensive package of resources that contain a solid core curriculum, and vibrant supplemental programs.

The School District of Philadelphia, for example, saw a substantial jump in student test scores on the state-mandated test last year that led to dramatic improvement in meeting the federal law's academic requirements. The number of schools nearly tripled from 58 to 160 attaining "Adequate Yearly Progress" requirements in one year.

To boost math test scores, the nation's eighth largest school system used funding from its Urban Systemic Program grant for the implementation of a math intervention supplement to target the needs of its inner-city students.

The district turned to an initiative called *First in Math*, part of the 24 Challenge Math Program that offers elementary and middle school students a fast-paced mental arithmetic game to improve reasoning skills. The Council of the Great City Schools is the long-time national sponsor of 24 Challenge.

The Philadelphia *First in Math* online program was used in more than 2,600 third through eighth grade classrooms throughout the district during the 2003-2004 school year.

"The program was selected to meet criteria defined by district CEO Paul Vallas," says Bob Sun, creator of the 24 Game family of math programs.

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Students, Parents....

publishing company, and American Happenings, an organization that promotes democracy.

Sponsors of the election hope that it will increase student achievement and help students have a better understanding of the democratic process, as well as be inspired to become active citizens and voters.

“The present generation of young Americans under the age of 18 constitutes the largest population group in the nation’s history, yet less than half can name the political party of their state’s governor, nor the party which controls Congress,” said John Herklotz, chairman of American Happenings and vice-chairman of the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

“Voting requires basic levels of reading comprehension, yet millions of Americans are unable to read an election leaflet or newspaper stories about political issues.”

Educators and parents can enroll

at www.nationalmockelection.org, where they will also find free curriculum materials for grades K-12.

Additionally, all state ballots can be downloaded from the National Student/Parent Mock Election web site and on the New Jersey Division of Elections web site. E-voting will also be available for teachers who wish to

have their students vote individually online.

The final results of the mock election will be available after 10 p.m. on October 28.

Since the program began 24 years ago, more than 40 million students and parents have participated in the project.

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Math Program....

“An intervention program in mathematics must 1) strengthen basic skills; 2) contain a technology element; and 3) create competition to motivate students to achieve.”

Based on rising test scores in math in the Philadelphia district, Sun believes the first-year implementation of the *First in Math* program was a resounding success.

“Students in the district logged over 216,000 hours on the *First in Math* site,” he points out, “proving their dedication and willingness to tackle a range of increasingly challenging math problems from simple addition through dec-

imals, fractions, exponents and complex algebra.”

Results from the 2003-2004 Pennsylvania State Standard Assessment showed a significant increase in overall performance in math. Grade five math scores rose 7.4 percentage points in the Philadelphia school district, compared to a 5.2 state average, according to a district press release.

In grade eight, Philadelphia math scores jumped by 11.1 percentage points, above the 6.1 percentage-point increase statewide.

“These results attest to the success of our reform measures,” says James Nevels, chairman of the Philadelphia school board.



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