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City Students Show Progress In Math, Reading

Students in the nation's big-city schools continue to show progress in mathematics and reading -- on both state and national tests, according to a new report.

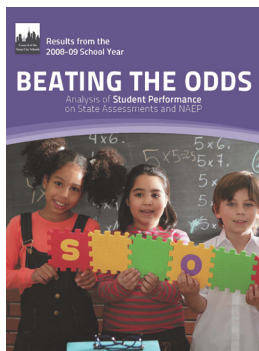
An analysis of academic performance in 65 urban school systems in 37 states and the District of Columbia identifies measurable test-score gains from 2006 to 2009 in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and reading on state assessments.

The upward trend parallels student achievement in large city districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), considered "The Nation's Report Card."

Beating the Odds: Analysis of Student Performance on State Assessments and NAEP by

the Council of the Great City Schools examines performance on the academic goals and standards set by the states under the federal

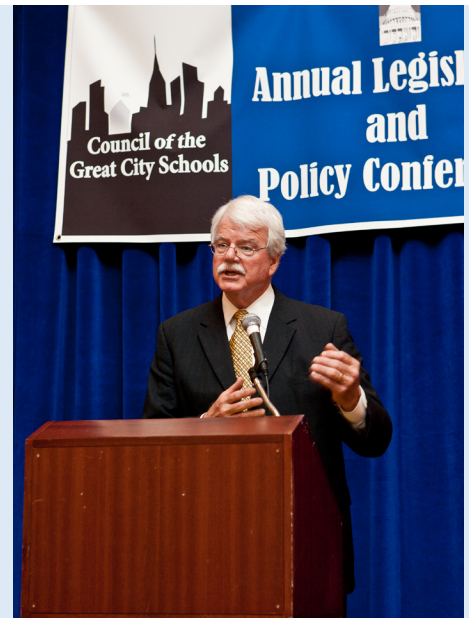
No Child Left Behind Act. The report is a compilation of state data on city-by-city percentages of urban public school students performing at or above "proficiency" and those who are scoring at the lowest levels.



City Students continued on page 4



Education Secretary Arne Duncan



House Education Chairman George Miller

Education Secretary, Congressional Leaders Address Urban Educators

Empowering Local Educators

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan believes that students dropping out of school is a national challenge that must be solved to keep the nation competitive with other countries.

"We have a 27 percent dropout rate and 1.2 million dropouts every year," Duncan told big-city school leaders, board members, senior administrators and deans from colleges of education who converged in Washington, D.C., recently to attend the Council of the Great City Schools' annual Legislative/Policy Conference. "Every child that drops out

Education Secretary continued on page 6

Using Data Effectively

Congressman George Miller, (D-Calif.) had spent the previous night on Capitol Hill voting for passage of the historic health-care bill, so he was jubilant when he addressed urban educators the next morning at the Council of the Great City Schools' Legislative/Policy Conference in Washington, D.C.

"This health-care bill will change the lives of so many families," declared Miller. In addition to providing health insurance for millions, Miller also pointed out that the bill will improve access to college by creating a new direct loan program that will benefit students and their families.

Congressional Leaders continued on page 5

Urban Schools Win Transformation Awards

Branch Brook School in Newark is the only public school in the New Jersey city with 100 percent of third and fourth graders passing all parts of a state standardized test.

A past recipient of the U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon of Excellence Award, the school may now add one more recognition to its list of accomplishments. Branch Brook was recently named a winner of the 2010 National Excellence in Urban Education Award.

Presented by San Diego State University's National Center for Urban School Transformation, the award was given to 13 high-performing urban schools across the nation--nine in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

In order to be eligible for the award, schools had to have a large number of students from low-income families, high test scores, little or no achievement gaps and high attendance and graduation rates.

In addition to Newark, schools in Atlanta, Wichita, New York City, Rochester, N.Y., Dallas and Long Beach, Calif., were honored. Two schools in Los Ange-



Students at Wichita's Horace Mann Dual Language Magnet excitedly read a book. The school was one of the winners of a 2010 National Excellence in Urban Education Award. Photo Credit: Ken Jantz

les were also recognized among the Council districts.

Out of 45 applicants, 25 finalists were selected and visited by a team of evaluators who observed what students were learning and how teachers delivered the lessons.

"It was nice to have educators from

other areas of the country say, 'Wow! Look at what you do to educate students,'" said Ken Jantz, principal of Wichita's Horace Mann Dual Language Magnet, one of the winning schools.

Each winning school receives a \$1,000 award.



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Dayton Names Superintendent; Las Vegas Leader to Step Down



Lori Ward

Lori Ward joined Ohio's Dayton Public Schools in 1995 as a math teacher after serving 15 years in the corporate world.

After rising through the ranks, she will now lead the school district, having been selected to take the helm on July 1.

Ward succeeds Kurt Stanic, who has been the leader of the Dayton school system since 2009.

Ward has served as the school system's deputy superintendent since 2008, where she is responsible for managing the district's business operations. She has also served as the district's executive director of information and educational technology and business chief.

According to the *Dayton Daily News*, Dayton school board president Jeffrey Mims said Ward has a strong work ethic and sense of fair play. "She's been a real go-to person for a number of years for almost all of the departments," said Mims.

Las Vegas Leader to Depart

In 2005, Walt Rulffes was appointed the interim superintendent for Las Vegas' Clark County School District and one year later was named the district's superintendent.



Walt Rulffes

He recently announced his plans to step down from the nation's fifth largest school system, when his contract expires this August.

Under his leadership, the district increased the number of career and technical academies, graduation rates increased, dropout rates decreased and magnet programs were strengthened.

Last year, the Nevada Association of School Superintendents named Rulffes Nevada Superintendent of the Year and in 2008, he was named Superintendent of the Year by the Nevada Association of School Boards.

In addition, he was a finalist for this year's National Superintendent of the Year Award presented by the American Association of School Administrators.

Superintendents Sacrifice Salaries For Schools



Maurice Green

Many big-city school systems are facing economic shortfalls, with some superintendents making personal contributions to help their respective school districts and students.

The leader of North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, Maurice Green, recently decided to return his salary raise to the school district.

Green declined a 3 percent pay raise that was mandated in his contract for the 2010-11 school year. This marks the second year he has volunteered to lower his salary; during a two-year period, he has lowered his compensation by \$22,500.

"I believe in my heart that leaders must lead on issues like salary," said Green in a news statement. "This is the right thing to do."

"He has provided superb and wonderful leadership to the school district," said board chairman Alan Duncan,



Melody Johnson

who thanked Green on behalf of the board for his generosity.

And in Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District, Superintendent Melody Johnson is dedicating a portion of her salary to help students pay for college.

Johnson has created the Superin-

Superintendents Sacrifice continued on page 12

Obama's Nobel Prize To Benefit St. Louis Students

When President Barack Obama was awarded the \$1.4-million Nobel Peace Prize last year, he said he would donate the money to charity. The president has made good on his promise, and as a result, students in St. Louis will benefit.

Ten organizations were recently selected to share the \$1.4-million prize money and one of the organizations was College Summit, which helps students attend postsecondary institutions. The organization will donate \$10,000 to its St. Louis branch.

Launched in 2005, College Summit-St. Louis partners with three local school districts, including St. Louis Public Schools. More than 4,500 students have participated in the organization, which trains principals and teachers to help students attend postsecondary institutions.

"In our five-year partnership with College Summit, St. Louis Public Schools has not only sent more students to college but has also experienced a district-wide shift toward a college-going culture," said St. Louis Schools Superintendent Kelvin Adams. "We have a long way to go but the support provided by programs like College Summit has been instrumental in changing our culture."

City Students *continued from page 1*

“The study presents the best available picture of how America’s urban public schools are performing on state tests and strongly suggests that they are making substantial progress in both reading and mathematics,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly before the release of the report at a press conference.

The gains have captured the attention of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “Across the country, we see many extraordinary schools and districts serving high-poverty populations that are succeeding year after year,” he says in a statement regarding the progress in urban education.



At a news conference on the release of the Council’s *Beating the Odds* report, Seattle Schools Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson attributes her district’s academic success to directly supporting teachers with professional development. She was joined by Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks, left, as well as Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

students who scored at or above proficient between 2006 and 2009, while 71 percent of districts improved eighth-grade student performance.

The same school districts that outperformed their respective states in math did so in both fourth- and eighth-grade reading as well. And the districts that matched or exceeded their states in fourth-grade math also did so in fourth-grade reading.

At the press conference, Superintendent Winston Brooks of Albuquerque Public Schools, one of the districts that outpaced its state in both math and

reading, attributed progress to a unified curriculum among other factors. Earlier, the school system had more than 25 different reading programs.

Brooks also noted that changing the community’s expectation of students led to progress. “We had to change a culture of mediocrity to a culture of excellence,” he said at the news conference and reported in *Education Week*. “Our kids do have the capability to be successful.”

National Test Scores

Considered a more rigorous assessment, NAEP is much different than the respective state-mandated tests.

Beating the Odds shows that students in large cities made significant gains on NAEP mathematics in both grades four and eight; and reading in grade four.

“When analyzing both state and national assessments, it is evident that the academic gains by urban school students are real, and reform efforts by urban educators are bearing fruit,” Casserly stresses.

The percentage of fourth graders in large cities who scored at or above proficient on NAEP in math rose to 29 percent in 2009

from 24 percent in 2005, and to 24 percent from 19 percent in eighth grade. The jump is considered statistically significant when compared with NAEP scores in public schools across the nation.

In reading, the percentage of fourth graders in large cities who scored at or above proficient jumped to 22 percent in 2007 from 20 percent in 2005, but was stagnant in eighth-grade at 20 percent in 2005 and 2007, matching a zero increase nationally as well.

North Carolina’s Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system outperformed public schools nationwide in fourth-grade math on NAEP -- 45 percent compared with 38 percent, respectively. Also, another big-city school system, Austin in Texas, outpaced the nation’s public schools in eighth-grade math -- 39 percent compared with 33 percent, respectively.

Moreover, a few big-city school districts saw black and Hispanic students score significantly higher than their counterparts in public schools across the nation.

Achievement Gaps

Beating the Odds shows some progress in reducing racial achievement gaps in urban school districts.

The majority of the big-city school systems -- 67 percent -- narrowed the gap between their fourth-grade black and white students statewide in math proficiency, and 62 percent in eighth grade. Between Hispanic and white fourth graders statewide, 76 percent of the urban school districts narrowed the gap, and 69 percent in eighth grade.

In reading, some 49 percent of the districts narrowed the black-white achievement gap among fourth graders and 53 percent among eighth-grade students. Some 57 percent of big-city districts narrowed the Hispanic-white achievement gap in reading in fourth grade and 53 percent at the eighth-grade level.

The complete ninth edition of *Beating the Odds*, including city-by-city profiles, can be found on the Council’s web site at www.cgcs.org.

State Math Progress

Beating the Odds finds that urban school students are performing better in mathematics than in reading on state-mandated tests.

Seventy-nine percent of big-city school districts increased the percentage of fourth-grade students who scored at or above proficient between 2006 and 2009, and 88 percent of districts increased eighth-grade student performance.

Six school districts -- Albuquerque, Anchorage, Broward County (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), Charleston, Palm Beach and Portland, Ore. -- showed both fourth- and eighth-grade math scores that were equal to or greater than their respective states.

Other urban districts -- Charlotte, Clark County (Las Vegas), Long Beach, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle -- had fourth-grade math scores matching or exceeding their states.

State Reading Progress

In reading, 73 percent of urban districts increased the percentage of fourth-grade

Congressional Leaders *continued from page 1*

Miller, chairman of the House of Representatives' Education & Labor Committee, also praised Education Secretary Arne Duncan for meeting with Democratic and Republican leadership in Congress to discuss the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). He believes that Duncan's effort puts Congress on a road to passing the law in a bipartisan manner.

Miller noted that the Department of Education's Race to the Top program sends a strong signal of change to the education system that serves millions of students.

"It's an opportunity to take and move systems into modern data, so we know where we are and where you need to go," Miller told conferees. He believes the program encourages the smart use of data and gives teachers, principals and parents a better idea of where students are academically.

According to Miller, health care and education have been the most resistant fields to using data. "If we want intervention in education, we need to have information on how [educators] are doing with the population they have today," said Miller.

The California congressman said there is a big debate focusing on turning around low-performing schools and cited the school in Rhode Island that made national news when all of its teachers were fired.

"We don't need drama, we need effective data and results," said Miller.

The chairman wants to make sure the reauthorization of ESEA will offer urban education administrators the opportunity to participate in the process of improving schools, because urban leaders have both the greatest expertise and the most serious challenges.

Miller strongly hopes that the issues being undertaken in the reauthorization of ESEA will improve the education of children, especially those students who are languishing in low-performing schools.

"We need the change for those students in schools in the shortest amount of time," said Miller.



Congressman Chaka Fattah

Exciting Times in Education

Congressman Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.) believes that it is an exciting time for education and offers numerous opportunities for students ranging from pre-school to graduate school.

"The federal government, under President Obama's leadership, is stepping up in a big way to knock down the inequities in education resources and opportunities for our young people most in need of help," said Fattah in remarks to urban educators. "His Education Blueprint is the most forceful plan yet for fixing our nation's schools."

A member of the House Appropriations Committee, Fattah told conferees that he is spearheading an initiative to expand access to school nutrition in high-poverty schools.

"The nation must make sure kids have access to quality nutrition," said Fattah, and noted that proper nutrition for children has a direct bearing on their education.

The congressman will also work to focus on resource equity in the ESEA reauthorization and said he is enormously pleased that for the first time the Department of Education has put equity on its priority list.

Fattah, the chairman of the Congressional Urban Caucus, said that Congress should be judged on how committed it is to putting education on the front burner.

"Smart bombs are not going to protect us if we don't have smart children," said Fattah. "I have to remind my colleagues that no matter how much education costs, ignorance costs much more."

Council Supports Common Standards

When the public draft of kindergarten to 12th-grade common core standards were released March 10, the Council of the Great City Schools called the draft a set of standards that the nation can be proud of.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers issued the draft K-12 standards in English-language arts and mathematics as part of the Common Core Standards Initiative, led by state governors and chief state school officers.

"Urban educators believe that the best way to counter challenges posed by poverty or limited English proficiency is not to lower expectations, but to raise them," says Michael Casserly, executive director of the Great City Schools coalition.

"This is one of the reasons why the Council called for the development of national standards a few years ago."

The Council was the first group of education officials nationally to endorse common education standards. It had indicated to the states that if they didn't develop national standards, then the big-city school districts would.

Urban Educators Involved

A panel of urban educators, called the National Education Standards Review Committee of the Council of the Great City Schools, gave input to the draft college- and career-readiness standards last September and in February. The panel has contributed to the development of the K-12 draft common core standards.

The 18-member review committee is chaired by Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson, and includes superintendents from Anchorage, Atlanta, Denver, Milwaukee, Richmond, Va., San Francisco and Seattle. It also includes leaders of instruction, research, special education as well as English language learner programs in big-city school districts.

Education Secretary *continued from page 1*

is another child condemned to poverty.”

The nation's ninth secretary of education also believes that the goal of educators should be not only to graduate students, but prepare them for college or a career because “a high school diploma just doesn't cut it anymore.”

Duncan applauded the fact that 48 states are working together to create common core standards and said the movement is a game changer that will alter education in this country forever.

The former chief executive officer for Chicago Public Schools observed that leadership comes from the local level and that there are a number of states implementing innovation and using data in thoughtful and effective ways.

He cited Louisiana, which tracks the academic growth of students from pre-K to 12th grade. “It's common sense,” said Duncan, who believes that more states should be doing this.

The secretary noted that his administration has more discretionary funding than any other education administration and wants to invest in places that are doing the work and getting the results. He cited Race to the Top as an example of a program that can foster innovation and excellence.

Duncan said that the Department of Education wants to challenge the status quo on the nation's low-performing schools and that the country has a moral obligation to do so. The department has asked states to identify schools in the bottom five percent, in terms of student achievement, and districts will be required to implement a turnaround plan to improve the schools.

He recalled that when he led the nation's third largest school system, he closed a school that had a 60 percent dropout rate and where only 3 percent of students scored proficient in math. The school was transformed into three schools with one of the schools recently making national headlines because all of the 107 black males in the senior class were accepted to four-year colleges.

“Poverty is not destiny,” stressed Duncan. “Too many people want to say what blacks and brown children can't do.”

NCLB Reauthorization

The secretary said that the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) shined a spotlight on the achievement gap and he wants to continue to maintain a laser-like focus on the issue.

He acknowledged, however, that the law in some cases has stigmatized schools by labeling them as failures. Duncan believes that changes must be made to the law to raise standards and reward excellence instead of just punishing failure. “NCLB caused many states to lower standards, when at times we needed to raise the bar,” he said.

The secretary believes one of the unintentional consequences of the law is a narrowing of the curriculum, with teachers focused on reading and math to the exclusion of other subjects. He has called for the law to create incentive structures to introduce students to a well-rounded curriculum.

Duncan also wants more flexibility under the law for school districts and recalled that when he headed Chicago public schools the district was forbidden under NCLB to tutor thousands of students.

“I don't want to micromanage 95,000 schools from D.C.,” declared Duncan, “but empower great principals and teachers.”

He said that the Obama Administration is committed to improving NCLB and that education can be the one issue everyone can work on in a bipartisan manner.

“Ideology and politics have nothing to do with getting a child to read,” said Duncan.

After his address, the secretary participated in a lively question-and-answer session.

A school board member wanted to know, “What is the impetus behind the focus on charter schools?”

Duncan said that good charters are part of the solution and bad charters are part of the problem and that charters should be held accountable.

“I'm not pro-charter or anti-charter. I just want good schools,” stressed Duncan, who noted that charters will always be a tiny portfolio and that the vast majority of students in the nation will go to traditional schools.

Duncan was also asked what is the best way to get good teachers and principals into low-achieving schools.

The secretary acknowledged that there is no easy answer, but having good teachers and principals with high expectations is vitally important to a school's success.

Two years ago, he visited a school in Philadelphia that was the second



Anchorage Schools Superintendent Carol Comeau addresses a question to Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

most violent school in the city, but is now violence-free. He asked a student why and the student told him, “We were expected to fight, but now we're not expected to fight.”

Council Executive Director Michael Casserly thanked Duncan for the funds big-city school districts received under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, but said that Council districts are projected to lose \$4 billion in state and local revenue in the 2010-2011 school year.

The education secretary said he believes that the governors of all 50 states need to support a new stimulus bill in Congress, and express a sense of urgency for passing it.

“I worry about the decisions you will have to make in the fall,” he told the assembled urban school superintendents and board members.

Longstanding Lawsuit Reaches Settlement In Baltimore

After 26 years of litigation, Baltimore City Public Schools has finally reached a settlement in a special education lawsuit.

A federal judge last month accepted a settlement agreement that ends active court oversight of the school system as of July 1. The preliminary approval paves the way for a final settlement in two years, which would end the lawsuit entirely.

Since 1984, the Baltimore city school system has been involved in federal litigation in what's known as the "Vaughn G." lawsuit over the district's "failure to meet the needs of, and deliver adequate services to, students with disabilities -- approximately 15 percent of its student population," according to a district press statement.

Under terms of the settlement agreement, Baltimore City Schools will be released from the court-ordered obligations of the current consent decree, which in 2000 authorized a court-appointed special master to oversee special education. The school system will now be able to join all other school districts in the state and report directly to the Maryland State Department of Education on special education services.



Andrés Alonso

"This is a monumental step," says City Schools CEO Andrés Alonso. "This settlement agreement underscores great progress in areas where the school system was, for many years, hugely deficient."

Attorney Leslie Margolis, who represented the special education students in the lawsuit for many of the 26 years, credited Alonso for his leadership of the Baltimore schools since 2007 in forging the settlement. The school district had agreed "to work hard, to work well and to work in partnership," he said in the *Baltimore Sun*.

Author Thomas Friedman Explains Education In a 'Flat World' at Assessment Conference

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and noted author Thomas Friedman traveled to India in 2004 and interviewed a business owner who claimed the global economic playing field is being flattened.

The issue of how to educate American students in a "flat world," in which the competitive playing field between industrial and emerging market countries is leveling, was the topic of Friedman's recent



Thomas Friedman

address at the National Conference on Next Generation Assessment Systems in Washington, D.C.

Friedman noted that there are three inventions that have caused the world to become flat.

The first was the invention of the personal computer (PC) because it led individuals to author their own content in digital form.

The second flattener occurred on August 9, 1995, when a small company in California called Netscape went public with its invention called the browser.

According to Friedman, the browser changed the world forever because it brought the Internet to life and into the wider world.

The third flattener was transmission protocols, which created a world where a computer could communicate with another computer. This workflow revolution enabled people to share digital content with anybody in the world and created a platform where people could collaborate

with each other.

As a result of this collaboration, Friedman said that it is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more people on more different kinds of work and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world.

According to Friedman, in order for Americans to be competitive in this new "flat world" they must use their imagination and creativity to the fullest.

He said that there are high imagination countries and low imagination countries and that leaders need to ask themselves if they have people with the necessary imaginative spark to compete.

The *New York Times* columnist believes the best way colleges can help students navigate this new world is by offering them a liberal arts education.

"I'm a huge fan of the liberal arts," said Friedman. "They are the greatest source of inspiration and imagination."

He said that America, in the quest to compete with students in countries like Singapore, must not lose its creativity.

Friedman observed that unlike in Singapore, American schools do not have to offer a class on how to be creative.

He urged educators to "let's find a way to channel and nurture [that creativity]."

Evaluating Assessments

Sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools, the Education Commission of the States and the Center for K-12 Assessment and Performance Management, the conference attracted more than 250 state and big-city urban school leaders who were presented with four design models of next generation K-12 assessment systems. Conferees learned

Thomas Friedman continued on page 10

Charlotte Teacher Creates Path For STEM Careers

An award-winning teacher at a Charlotte, N.C., high school, where many of the students are minorities from low-income families, is creating a path for students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Biology teacher Tamica Stubbs at E.E. Waddell High School has earned millions of dollars in grants to create a research program and lab that teaches about nanoscience and biotechnology -- courses many high school students can't access until college.

Waddell graduate Jennifer Telchow, one of the first students to study nanoscience at the school, is now a freshman at Stanford University, planning to study biology or technology.

"Ms. Stubbs has a unique way of teaching that allows students to be involved in hands-on learning activities that stimulate a personal desire to learn and explore," she says in a press release. "She stops at nothing to get a student to better understand the content."

In the last four years, Stubbs has created several science teams at Waddell to give students exposure to high-level research projects. The Students Modeling A Research Topic (SMART) and Genetics Research teams studied DNA samples and researched the affects of steroids. They also presented their project results at national science conferences and competitions.

"This method is teaching them to think like a scientist and researcher," says Alice Lee, education director for the Contemporary Science Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Stubbs has been rewarded for her work. She recently won the Burroughs Wellcome Fund award -- a \$175,000, five-year grant. She will also receive \$20,000 a year for professional development and classroom equipment.

"I plan to transform my classroom into a state-of-the-art biotechnology lab," Stubbs emphasizes.



Biology teacher Tamica Stubbs gives intense instruction to students.

She has also received the Shell Science Teaching Award, a national recognition for science teachers who have a positive impact on student achievement. She received \$10,000 and an all-expenses paid trip to the 2010 National Science Teachers Association conference.

"Tamica Stubbs is showing the community, the state and the country the power of an enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher," says Cindy Moss, director of science, technology, engineering and math education of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, which is a candidate for the 2010 Broad Prize for Urban Education.

NYC to Expand Program Recognized by *TIME*

The School of One is a technology program that was created last year as a summer pilot at one middle school in New York City to provide students with individualized classroom instruction. The program was so successful, increasing student math scores significantly, that it was featured in *TIME* magazine as one of the 50 best inventions of 2009.

The nation's largest school system is now expanding School of One to three middle

NYC Program continued from page 12

Council Supports School Reforms In K.C. and Detroit

The Council of the Great City Schools stands behind major school reform efforts under way in the Kansas City and Detroit school systems.

Last month, the Kansas City school board voted 5 to 4 to endorse Superintendent John Covington's proposed Right-Size plan, which would close nearly half of the public schools in the Missouri city -- some 28 of the city's 61 schools.

"The decision to close schools is difficult and is made more wrenching by the fact that the Kansas City school district has failed to bite the bullet on a series of underlying structural and instructional problems for many years," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

"Avoiding hard decisions about the future of the school district is no longer an option," he stresses.

In 2006, the Council produced an analysis based on an extensive review of instruction and operations in the Kansas City school district. It recommended that the school district "make a number of instructional, organizational, management and operational changes to improve achievement, effectiveness and efficiency," says the report.

Also last month, the Detroit Public Schools announced a facilities master plan "to create a leaner, more efficient system," officials note. The plan calls for the closure of 45 buildings.

Over the years, the Council has dispatched a number of strategic support teams to help the Detroit school system. In 2008, it produced an analysis titled *Reforming and Improving the Detroit Public Schools*.

Casserly says that other big-city school districts across the nation are facing many of the same difficult choices as Kansas City and Detroit. "But as they are making the tough choices, these districts find that they emerge on the other side with a community that is more confident and students who are better prepared for the future."

Urban School Leaders Can Now Gauge Business Performance via Online 'Tool'

The Council of the Great City Schools recently unveiled a web-based "tool" for its 66 member urban school districts to access first-of-its-kind data to gauge business performance among themselves.

Now leaders of the big-city school systems can instantly access key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and improve effectiveness and efficiencies in the areas of business services, finances, technology and human resources.

The tool allows the nation's urban school systems to compare themselves utilizing pioneering key performance indicators modeled after those used in the private sector.

The automated KPIs are part of a Council project that began in 2005 to

improve business performance in urban school systems and benchmark proven practices to streamline non-instructional business services and increase operational efficiencies.

"Automating the indicators allows for better data collection, eases analysis of results, permits analysis of 'what if' scenarios, and frees managers to devote more time to implementing best practices with greater confidence than ever before," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Urban school leaders can access the KPIs on the Council web site at www.cgcs.org. A password-protected site is called "CGCS KPI Project -- Manage for Results."

School Social Worker In Greensboro, N.C., Reunites Family

For the past three years, a social worker at the Newcomers School in Greensboro, N.C., has been trying to reunite three students with their father in Tanzania.

Angel Katona's efforts to free the students' father from a refugee camp in the African nation finally paid off. Aniceth Mpawenayo recently arrived in Greensboro to join his children and wife.

Father Arrives From African Refugee Camp

The siblings first met Katona at the Newcomers School, which helps students new to the United States get a chance to acclimate to American society and learn the English language while continuing their education.

The students also spent time in the refugee camp in Tanzania before their family, natives of war-torn Burundi, received permission to come to the U.S. However, because of a simple spelling error, their father could not leave.

With the students crying for their father, Katona began a three-year journey to reunite the family. She contacted the Immigration Services and the Department of Homeland Security as well as the U.S. embassy in Tanzania. "I had faith through the whole process that it would probably work, but at some points we hit some low periods," she told the local FOX-TV station in Greensboro.

It was discovered that a simple spelling mistake by United Nations workers prevented the father from coming with his family.

For her efforts, Katona last month was named Guilford County Schools "Employee of the Month" to exemplify the caring spirit of employees in the North Carolina school system.



First Lady Visits Jackson, Miss.

First Lady Michelle Obama recently took her "Let's Move" initiative to fight childhood obesity to Jackson, Miss., where Jackson Public Schools Superintendent Lonnie Edwards Sr. applauds her presence and campaign. She engaged in talks with school officials and Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour about health and wellness initiatives across the state.

If There is No ESEA Reauthorization This Year

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

The reauthorizing of major federal education laws is often begun under one congress and completed under another. So what will happen if the 111th Congress does not reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year?

Initially, thousands of additional schools will fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) since that law's sanction system will remain in place. Because about half the states – with Department of Education approval – used a loophole in the NCLB accountability system to “back-load” their performance targets into the last four years of the universal proficiency mandate, the number of schools failing to meet the law's escalating annual targets will skyrocket between school year 2010-11 and 2013-14.

The Washington-based Center for Education Policy reports that one-third of the nation's schools currently fail to meet adequate yearly progress requirements, including over 75 percent of schools in Florida and over 50 percent in nine other states. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The rest of the iceberg remains hidden by myriad loopholes, statistical manipulations, and regulatory changes that have artificially suppressed by more than half in some cases the number of schools failing to attain proficiency targets. The minimum subgroup size (N-size), confidence intervals, alternate standards, modified standards, former limited English proficient, assessment exemptions, and the like have allowed tens of thousands of schools to avoid the AYP system and its related sanctions.

Secondly, the ballooning proficiency targets due to this “back-loading” will subject thousands of schools to the statu-



tory sanctions associated with school improvement, corrective action, and restructuring requirements under *No Child Left Behind*. NCLB's 20 percent spending provision requiring the funding of supplemental education services (SES) and public school transfers in thousands of additional schools will result in hundreds of millions of dollars devoted to activities of little or no academic benefit at a time when school districts are scrapping for every available dime.

In short, the “labeling” of poorly-performing schools under the AYP system and the “mandated expenditures” of sizable amounts of Title I funds on unproductive activities are the primary effects of a reauthorization that does not move forward this year. Other problems, like the continuing reliance on questionable state standards and assessments and the increasing numbers of schools subject to fuzzy “restructuring” requirements, have less dramatic effect but are counterproductive nonetheless.

While the purpose of *No Child Left Behind* related to closing achievement gaps remains unassailable, its operational details have proven to be seriously flawed. If nothing else, the fact that a third of the schools in the country have now been deemed as failures takes the meaning and credibility out of the sanctions and the stigma out of the labels. But the continued waste of scarce dollars on ineffective programs and activities is troubling. In the absence of a reauthorization, the current Department of Education could solve some of these side-effects if it wanted to through the waiver process. In the meantime, an ever-increasing number of schools wait for relief.

Thomas Friedman continued from page 7

how these assessment systems can inform instruction and make students more globally competitive.

“Federal funding has created a unique opportunity for the nation and our states to advance the quality of our assessments and to improve the data systems to better

serve our teachers, students and parents,” said Pascal Forgione, executive director of the K-12 Center.

Katherine Blasik, associate superintendent, research development & assessment for Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said the “conference

gave hope that we can reform education in the United States, with a national core curriculum for our new generation that is strengthened by assessments and designed to help every teacher, parent and student know what has been learned and what is needed next.”

Pictorial of 2010 Legislative Conference



Education Secretary Arne Duncan poses with the Council's leadership, left to right, Chair Carol Johnson, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, Chair-elect Dilafruz Williams and Secretary-Treasurer Beverly Hall.



Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa asks a question.



Indianapolis Schools Superintendent Eugene White and Richmond Schools Superintendent Yvonne Brandon listen intently during a conference session.



St. Paul Superintendent Valeria Silva and school board chair Elona Street-Stewart take notes at a legislative briefing.



Former Education Secretary Rod Paige greets current Education Secretary Arne Duncan before Duncan addresses urban educators.

Photos by Alex Jones



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NYC Program *continued from page 8*

schools as an after-school math program. More than 240 sixth-grade students are participating in a seven-week program that combines traditional teaching with instructional software so that students receive an educational program that is customized to their academic needs, interests and learning styles.

Each day, students are given a lesson plan tailored to the concepts they need to learn that includes a mix of virtual tutoring, in-class instruction and educational video games. Students follow their own schedule based on what they accomplished the previous day and teachers receive data about student achievement and adapt their lessons accordingly.

A study that evaluated last summer's pilot revealed that School of One boosted scores by 28 percentage points on a test of middle school math skills given before and after the program, raising student scores from an average of 42 percent to 70 percent.

TIME magazine called the program "learning for the Xbox generation" and New York Schools Chancellor Joel Klein

believes that "School of One represents some of the most cutting-edge work being done in education today."

In addition to the technology program being offered as an after-school math program, district officials plan to offer School of One during the school day at three middle schools during the 2010-2011 school year.

Superintendents Sacrifice *continued from page 3*

tendent's Student Scholarship Fund, which will award scholarships of up to \$5,000 to graduating seniors in the district. In order to be eligible for the scholarship, students must have a grade-point-average of at least 3.0, demonstrate a commitment to personal growth and service to others and demonstrate a financial need.

The number of scholarships awarded will be based on the number of applicants.

"It is an honor for me to fund this scholarship and reward deserving young people who are working hard to better themselves," said Johnson in a press release. "Those are the young people who will pay-it-forward by contributing to others with the kind of aid and support they have themselves been given."



Dallas School Named For Trailblazer

The Dallas Independent School District has named a school for Kathlyn Gilliam, right, the first African American woman elected to the Dallas school board and its first black president. She pioneered new opportunities for minority students, staff and teachers in the Dallas school system. She poses with Kathlyn Gilliam Collegiate Academy principal Gayle Ferguson Smith.