



Urban Educator

The Nation's Voice for Urban Education

Legislative
Conference Edition

Vol. 15, No. 4

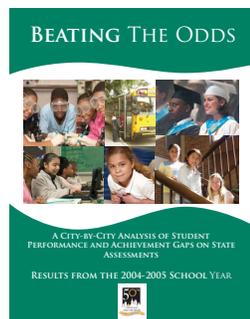
www.cgcs.org

April 2006

Study Finds Gains Up In City Schools

For the first time in comparing state and federal test scores, a study finds parallel upward achievement in the nation's big-city public schools.

The Council of the Great City Schools' sixth annual report called



Beating the Odds shows students in 66 major city public school systems in 38 states posting new gains in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics

and reading on state-mandated assessments in 2005.

And in examining scores of urban school districts that volunteered to take the often more rigorous federal test – the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – the study shows evidence generally corroborating that the state gains are solid.

continued on page 3

Council Honors Congressman

As a member of the House of Representatives Education and Workforce Committee, Rep. Major Owens (D-NY) has taken the lead in supporting school libraries, school construction and greater job training for youth.

He was recently recognized for his efforts when the Council of the Great City Schools presented him with the Thurgood Marshall Award for Excellence and Equity in Urban Education at its Annual Legislative/Policy Conference in Washington, D.C.

“The amount of money big-city school districts get in Title I is in large part due to Major Owens,” said Council Executive Michael Casserly in presenting the award to the lawmaker.

continued on page 6



Rep. Major Owens



Education Secretary Spellings

Spellings Cites Urban School Achievement

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings recently traveled to Newark, N.J., with First Lady Laura Bush to present the school district with a \$14 million grant to improve reading.

The grant is just one of eight *Striving Readers* grants the U.S. Department of Education has awarded this year. However, Spellings is looking forward to the day when the grants will no longer be needed.

“That’s the goal we set with *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB),” Spellings told more than 300 urban educators at the Council of the Great City Schools’ recent Annual Legislative/Policy Conference. “As a parent, I don’t think that’s too much to ask, and I’m sure you agree.”

Spellings believes the nation is well on its way to every child learning on grade level by 2014 and pointed as evidence to the results found in the Council’s new report, *Beating the Odds*.

continued on page 4

In this Issue

World-Class Curriculum Being Created.....	5
Buffalo Gets College Board School.....	8
Legislative Column: Who’s Voting ‘Yes’ or ‘No’?.....	10

urban Educator

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

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Albuquerque | Memphis |
| Anchorage | Miami-Dade |
| Atlanta | Milwaukee |
| Austin | Minneapolis |
| Baltimore | Nashville |
| Birmingham | Newark |
| Boston | New Orleans |
| Broward Co. | New York City |
| Buffalo | Norfolk |
| Charleston | Oakland |
| Charlotte | Oklahoma City |
| Chicago | Omaha |
| Christina | Orange County |
| Cincinnati | Palm Beach |
| Clark Co. | Philadelphia |
| Cleveland | Pittsburgh |
| Columbus | Portland |
| Dallas | Providence |
| Dayton | Richmond |
| Denver | Rochester |
| Des Moines | Sacramento |
| Detroit | St. Louis |
| Fort Worth | St. Paul |
| Fresno | Salt Lake City |
| Greensboro | San Diego |
| Houston | San Francisco |
| Indianapolis | Seattle |
| Jackson | Shreveport |
| Jacksonville | Tampa |
| Kansas City | Toledo |
| Long Beach | Tucson |
| Los Angeles | Washington, D.C. |
| Louisville | Wichita |

Newsletter Staff:

Executive Director Michael Casserly
Editor Henry Duvall
Associate Editor Tonya Harris

Council Officers:

Chair
 Arlene Ackerman
 Superintendent, San Francisco

Chair-Elect

George Thompson III
 Board Member, Nashville

Secretary-Treasurer

Carol Comeau
 Superintendent, Anchorage

All news items should be submitted to:
Urban Educator

Council of the Great City Schools
 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 702
 Washington, D.C. 20004
 (202) 393-2427 / (202) 393-2400 (Fax)

Editor's E-mail: hduvall@cgcs.org
Associate Editor's E-mail: tharris@cgcs.org

Cleveland, Charlotte and St. Paul Name New Superintendents

The superintendent of Ohio's Toledo Public Schools, Eugene Sanders, has received the nod to head the Cleveland Municipal School District, while North Carolina's Charlotte and Minnesota's St. Paul school systems have picked out-of-state educators to lead their districts.

The Cleveland school board as well as the mayor approved Sanders to be the next chief executive officer, succeeding Barbara Byrd-Bennett, who resigned after serving as CEO since 1998.



Eugene Sanders

"He's had a wonderful track record in Toledo," said Cleveland board member Louise Dempsey in the city's newspaper, *The Plain Dealer*.

Sanders has led the Toledo public school system for six years, receiving honors for academic achievement. One such honor came from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, recognizing the district for outstanding service to minority youth and bridging the racial achievement gap.

North Carolina's largest school district, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, recently picked the superintendent of California's Tustin Unified School District, Peter Gorman, to take the reins from interim district leader Frances Haithcock.

Gorman has been at the helm of the school system in Tustin, Calif., since 2001, and his leadership has led to the district meeting all Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals under the federal *No Child Left Behind* law, according to a Charlotte district statement.

In St. Paul, Minn., the school board chose Meria Carstarphen, the chief accountability officer for the District of Columbia Public Schools, to be the next superintendent.

"It was a tough decision and all five candidates brought amazing experience and talent to the table, but we ultimately felt that she would be the best fit," said Elona Street-Steward, board chair of the St. Paul Public Schools, in a news release.



Meria Carstarphen

Carstarphen has been with the public school system in Washington, D.C., since 2004, and is credited with overseeing key initiatives under a new superintendent.

Baltimore Wins Takeover Attempt

State efforts to take over 11 Baltimore City schools recently fell to defeat in the Maryland legislature, which overrode the governor's veto.

State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick had set in motion a plan to restructure the low-performing schools under the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act -- with the U.S. Department of Education threatening to withdraw Title 1 funds from the state if the action was blocked.

"The federal *No Child Left Behind* Act does not require state takeover or privatization of public schools," says Jeff Simering, legislative director of the Council of the Great City Schools. "Federal law provides a number of options under the mantle of program improve-

continued on page 12

Inside the Council

Continued from page 1
Study Finds...

“The 2006 *Beating the Odds* study confirms what we saw with the latest *Nation’s Report Card* for urban schools,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, referring to NAEP. “The Great City Schools are raising achievement in many ways, for many students.”

State Test Scores

Data reveal that 58.5 percent of urban school students in the study scored at or above proficiency in fourth-grade math, a 14 percentage point increase from 44.5 percent in 2002 on state tests. For eighth graders, the percentage climbed to 45.7 percent, compared with 37.3 percent in 2002.

In reading, urban schoolchildren also posted gains, but not as fast as in math. From 2002 to 2005, the percentage of fourth graders scoring at or above proficiency in reading/language arts on state tests rose to 54.4 percent from 43.3 percent in 2002 – an 11.1 percent gain. For eighth graders, the percentage increased to 39.7 percent from 36.1 percent in 2002.

NAEP Scores

When examining fourth-grade math and reading scores on the NAEP, or federal test, data show that the gains coincide with the state trends, but at lower percentages of students scoring at or above proficiency on what is generally considered a more stringent exam than most state tests.

Some 24 percent of fourth graders in math scored at or above proficiency in 2005 on NAEP, a 4 percentage point hike from 20 percent in 2003, the first year of urban NAEP math results. In reading, 20 percent reached or went beyond the proficiency level in 2005, a 3 percentage point increase from 17 percent in 2002.

Increases in Percentages of 4th and 8th Grade Urban Students Scoring at or above Proficiency in Reading and Math*

	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change
4th Grade Reading	43.3%	47.9%	50.5%	54.4%	+11.1
4th Grade Math	44.5%	50.9%	55.4%	58.5%	+14.0
8th Grade Reading	36.1%	37.7%	38.6%	39.7%	+3.6
8th Grade Math	37.3%	39.3%	43.1%	45.7%	+8.4

***Percentages reflect student performances on differing state assessments in cities that administered the same test in each of four consecutive years**

“The data suggest that improvement can be attained and sustained in the nation’s inner cities,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “Evidence from two completely different assessments indicates that the progress in urban schools is indeed real.”

City-by-City Data

Beating the Odds gives city-by-city analysis of how inner-city schools are performing on the academic goals and standards set by their respective states to measure student achievement.

The study also includes, for the first time, how student test scores of 11 big-city school districts that volunteered for the Trial Urban District Assessment, a special project in NAEP, compare with scores resulting from their respective state tests. Among the 11 cities are New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, the nation’s largest school systems.

Although urban schools show gains in math and reading performance, the big cities still lag behind state and national averages in fourth and eighth grades.

Three major urban school districts – Albuquerque, Anchorage and Florida’s Palm Beach County – had both fourth-

and eighth-grade math and reading scores that were equal to or greater than their respective states.

Achievement Gaps

Beating the Odds also presents data on racially identifiable achievement gaps, language proficiency, disability and income, as well as urban school demographic conditions and funding.

Academic achievement gaps by race and ethnicity appear to be narrowing, but the results are still preliminary, according to the study.

The report attributes the standards movement as the catalyst that triggered improvement in urban schools. “The public reminded educators – particularly those in cities – why we were in business in the first place and what we were being held responsible for delivering,” says Casserly, noting that urban educators are “working harder and smarter than ever before.”

Casserly further points out, “It is now time to determine how the pace of improvement can be accelerated.”

The *Beating the Odds* report, including city-by-city data, can be found on the Council’s web site at www.cgcs.org.

Continued from page 1

Spellings...

The report found that big-city fourth grade students showed a 14 percentage point increase in math and an 11 percentage point gain in reading since 2002 on state-mandated tests.

“The Great City Schools are raising achievement in many ways, for many students,” said Spellings, a graduate of the Houston Independent School District.

‘Pocket-Protector Skills’

The nation’s top education official recalled that 30 years ago most manufacturing workers did not have high school diplomas, but now not only do most of them have high school diplomas, but almost one-third have attended college.

Spellings observed that employers in today’s society are looking for people who have “pocket protector skills”—creative problem-solvers with strong math and science backgrounds.

According to Spellings, a million students drop out of high school every year, with nearly five out of 10 African American and Hispanic ninth graders failing to graduate from high school on time.

“We wouldn’t tolerate five out of 10 planes going down,” said Spellings. “We wouldn’t tolerate five out of 10 heart surgeries failing. And we shouldn’t tolerate five out of 10 city students dropping out of high school!”

Spellings believes that rigorous coursework is one of the best ways to solve the dropout problem and noted that a student’s chance of graduating from college in four years increases by just taking one or two Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Yet, she observed that many students in economically disadvantaged communities don’t have the opportunity to take

these classes and that 40 percent of high schools offer no AP classes.

The secretary also noted that white students are far more likely than African Americans or Hispanics to take advanced courses in math and science.

“Sounds like the soft bigotry of expectations to me,” said Spellings. “With the way we ration these courses, you would think we don’t want students to take them.”

She commended several urban districts that were recently recognized by the College Board for their AP programs and said that the problems facing education must be addressed starting in elementary schools.

According to Spellings, the U.S. Department of Education has received the largest percentage budget increase of any domestic non-security-related agency, with Title I funding increasing by 45 percent and funding for NCLB increasing by 40 percent.

And in an effort to prepare students to compete in a society that has become increasingly global, Spellings said President Bush has created the American Competitiveness Initiative, which would devote \$380 million to extend high standards and accountability from K-12.

The initiative calls for:

- Creation of a National Math Panel to compile the best research on teaching math;
- A program called Math Now to help elementary and middle school students prepare for rigorous high school math; and

- Recruiting new teachers and training others to teach AP courses

The secretary urged educators to make these math and science initiatives a priority so students today will be better prepared for tomorrow’s jobs.

“If we raise our expectations,” said Spellings, “our students will rise to the challenge.”

After her address, Spellings held a question-and-answer session with conferees.

Katrina Concern

Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra said his district is educating 5,500 Hurricane Katrina evacuees this year and expects 80 percent will return to the district next year. He expressed his concern that the federal

government would not provide enough funding to help cover the cost of educating these students for an additional year.

Spellings said that the Department of Education has asked Congress for money to reimburse school districts

whom have taken in displaced students and said money has been allocated. She also noted that President Bush is sympathetic to districts that are educating students from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

Spellings also urged educators to contact their congressional representatives about this issue and continue to “fight the fight” and said she and other federal officials are focusing on getting aid to the districts that need it.

Spellings was not the only official from the Department of Education to address the conference. Urban educators

continued on page 5



Houston Schools Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra expresses concern

Inside the Council

Continued from page 4
Spellings...

also heard from Ray Simon, deputy secretary of education.

A former teacher, school district superintendent and Arkansas chief state school officer, Simon said that since 2002 when President Bush signed NCLB into law, the measure “is making a difference for kids,” with test scores on the rise, the achievement gap narrowing and fewer dropouts.

He said the law is maturing and the Department of Education is trying to improve the law, without changing it significantly.

“We want to make sure we understand what works and doesn’t work,” said Simon. “But we are not giving up the core mission of every child being on grade level by 2014.”

Simon also addressed the issue of schools using growth models to measure adequate yearly progress under NCLB. Last year, the Department of Education announced a pilot program in which states could receive credit for student improvement over time by tracking individual student achievement from year to year.

Approximately 20 states submitted proposals and Simon said up to 10 high-quality growth models will be chosen to participate in the pilot program for 2006-07.

Tutoring Needed

Under NCLB, children in low-performing schools are eligible to receive tutoring, known as supplemental education services. Simon noted that participation

rates of students eligible to receive these services have been abysmally low and education officials are working on ways to increase the number of students, as well as expand the number of options available for parents to choose from.

Simon acknowledged that the education department and the Council have been working to give 10 school districts labeled as being in improvement under NCLB the opportunity to provide their own supplemental services.

“We want the law to be a valid measure of what’s going on in schools,” said Simon, “and we want to make sure the right things are happening for kids.”

Legislative Briefings

In legislative briefings, conferees heard from Kerri Briggs, senior policy adviser for the Department of Education, who discussed some of the steps being taken regarding NCLB.

Briggs said federal education officials are working to make the state assessment systems more robust and noted that states are making progress in compiling data on student achievement in an effort to ensure that all students gain proficiency by 2014.

Conferees also heard from Erik Fatemi, a staff member with the U.S. Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Fatemi discussed the recent Senate passage of a budget amendment proposed by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), which would restore \$7 billion in health and education funding that was previously eliminated.

“The passage was an outstanding victory for education,” said Fatemi.



Deputy Secretary of Education Ray Simon

World-Class Curriculum Being Developed

Hatched in Louisville

Kentucky’s Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville has launched an initiative to align its mathematics and science curriculum to world-class standards, considered uncommon in the United States.

In collaboration with the Jefferson County Teachers Association, the district recently reviewed curriculum materials and instructional resources and found that its math and science programs were not sufficient to support implementation of international standards.

As a result, the district has decided to create the standards – “an effort to emulate high-achieving nations such as Singapore,” says an article in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

“Building our own curriculum represents a tremendous opportunity to improve the quality of instructional materials needed for our students to achieve at world-class standards,” says Superintendent Stephen Dae-schner, noting that this will prepare students for global competition.

A recent \$25-million grant from the GE Foundation set the stage for the school district to embark on the initiative.

The new math and science program is scheduled to be implemented in the 2007-08 school year, although a portion of the elementary science curriculum will be expanded this fall.

*Continued from page 1***Council Honors...**

“Thank you for being our champion and our beacon for education excellence.”

Owens was elected to Congress in 1982 and, after 24 years of service, is retiring at the end of the year. He recalled how he has served through four presidents and said that the nation has come a long way in regard to education.

“Twenty-four years ago we were teetering on the edge of the federal government not being responsible for education and wanting to minimize its role,” said Owens.

He said that the nation now realizes that in order to produce enough people to run a complex society, there must be a greater emphasis on education at the federal level. “You cannot talk about it [education] anymore just being a state or local function.”

The congressman strongly believes that unless the nation moves rapidly to increase the amount of money the federal government spends on education, which is currently only 8 percent, the problems facing education won't be solved.

“Twenty-five percent ought to be the minimum of what the federal government puts in,” stressed Owens. “The belief that the nation must stay out of federal education is a ridiculous idea.”

In addition to a lack of funding, Owens cited what he thinks is another problem facing education: most adults in America, as well as politicians, think they are experts on education.

Owens said that society would never allow a lawyer to take over a sur-

geon's operation room, yet people with little or no experience in education are allowed to make decisions concerning education policy.

“Only education professionals know what works,” said Owens. “We must not allow amateurs from other professions dictate to us.”

He also urged big-city leaders to keep pressuring the federal government to allocate more funds for schoolchildren.

Owens noted that the war in Iraq is approaching \$400 billion and the nation's wealthy have received tax cuts.

“Don't tell us that it's unrealistic the federal government can't spend that much money on education,” said Owens.

School Construction

The congressman said that during his 24 years in Congress he has often been accused of being a fanatic because of his relentless focus on school construction and modernization.

But he noted that school construction is one area in which the federal government can easily get involved and make a difference.

“The federal government can give us the capital funds we need to build schools,” said Owens. “It's one area where they could do the least amount of damage and the most good.”

The congressman urged urban educators to not be intimidated and afraid to speak out for what they think is right when it comes to helping the nation's schoolchildren.

“We depend on you,” said Owens. “You have to be the Mafia of education and bow to nobody.”



Congressman Owens receives the Thurgood Marshall Award in urban education from, left to right, Council legislative director Jeff Simering and Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Nebraska Moves To Break Up Omaha District

In an unprecedented move, the Nebraska legislature recently voted to divide the Omaha Public Schools into three separate districts – each serving predominantly African American, white and Hispanic students.

The vote, with the governor signing the measure into law, would break up the state's most culturally diverse public school system in July, 2008, according to news reports.

“We will go down in history as one of the first states in 20 years to set race relations back,” stressed Omaha Sen. Pat Bourne in an Associated Press story after the vote.

But the state's only African American senator, Ernie Chambers of Omaha, who spearheaded the bill through the legislature, argues that minorities would receive a better education if they had more control of their own district.

Omaha Public Schools has tried to rally the public around the concept of “One City, One School District.” Supporters include billionaire investor Warren Buffet, who reportedly indicated that the legislative action will be defeated in court.

“One City, One School District” is about solving the problems of racial and socio-economic isolation that currently exist between school districts in Omaha, and it is about assuring more financial equity,” says Superintendent John Mackiel and Board of Education President Sandra Kostos Jensen in a letter to parents back in January.

continued on page 10

Urban Schools Receive Federal *Striving Readers* Grants

When sixth graders at Avon Avenue School in Newark, N.J., practice their reading and writing skills, they usually don't get a lot of visitors in their classroom.

But one day last month, they had two visitors: First Lady Laura Bush and U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

They visited the school to award Newark Public Schools with a \$13.9 *Striving Readers* grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The district was one of eight recipients to receive a five-year grant to implement *Striving Readers*, a new program designed to increase the reading achievement levels of students in grades 6-8 in schools with a significant number of struggling readers.

"We know that with stronger reading skills, these students are more likely to graduate, less likely to drop out of school and more likely to go on to be able to find good jobs," said Bush in the *Newark Star-Ledger*.

Big-city schools receiving grants for the 2006-2007 school year included Memphis City Schools, (\$16 million); San Diego Unified School District, (\$17.5 million); Portland Public Schools, (\$23.5 million); and Chicago Public Schools, (\$24.5 million).

Chicago will use its grant in 32 elementary schools to fund after-

school tutoring and professional development programs for staff, including a teacher training initiative in partnership with National-Louis University.

And in Portland, Ore., the grant will help provide services to increase student achievement in four high schools and five middle schools.

Each district's *Striving Readers* program must include targeted intervention for struggling readers and must undergo a research-based evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the program.



First Lady Laura Bush visits Avon Avenue School in Newark to present the district with a \$13.9 million reading grant.

NYC to Grade Schools -- 'A' to 'F'

Three years ago, a multi-year reform effort called *Children First* was implemented to improve teaching and learning in New York City's public schools.

As part of that effort, the district recently launched an accountability initiative designed to measure student progress. Beginning next year, every school will receive a progress report—a grade ranging from "A" to "F" based on student performance on annual state exams, student learning gains and school environment, including attendance rates and parent satisfaction.

Schools will also receive quality reviews based on criteria such as principals' leadership skills and parent involvement.

These quality reviews will determine whether schools are labeled as "well developed," "proficient" or "undeveloped."

Schools that receive low letter grades and quality reviews may receive targeted improvement efforts, new leadership, undergo restructuring or eventually be closed.

The program will cost up to \$25 million to create and implement, according to *The New York Times*, and the school district plans to solicit contributions from donors.

A pilot quality review program has begun in some schools and district administrators say by next spring, all schools will have participated in a review.

"We can't afford to make excuses for the status quo; we must constantly strive to improve," said New York Schools Chancellor Joel Klein in a press statement. "The accountability we are infusing into our schools is a crucial step in that direction."

Boston, NYC Schools Named Again for Prize

The Boston and New York City school districts again this year have been chosen among the five finalists for the 2006 Broad Prize for Urban Education, an annual million-dollar prize awarded to urban school districts that have made the greatest improvements in academic achievement.

The other finalists: Florida's Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Connecticut's Bridgeport Public Schools and New Jersey's Jersey City School District.

The winner of the Broad Prize will receive \$500,000 in college scholarships for students while each of the four other finalists will receive \$125,000.

"The strength of our nation depends on the strength of our schools, especially

continued on page 10

Pittsburgh to Close 22 Schools

The Board of Education of the Pittsburgh Public Schools recently approved a comprehensive plan to close 22 schools, 18 buildings and create one new school aimed at maintaining the district's financial footing and boosting its academic program.

Called the Right-Sizing Plan, the initiative is projected to save the district \$14.7 million each year in operating costs, a district news release points out.

"I'm pleased that so much of the energy that has been expended on this plan now can be refocused on implementing the changes that will have our students attending more positive learning environments in September," says Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

The Right-Sizing Plan eliminates 10,117 of the Pittsburgh district's 13,706 empty seats, reducing the district from 86 schools in 80 buildings to 65 schools in 63 buildings. Also, one administrative building will close.

Closing schools is not easy. "It's every bit as hard to close a school as it is to close a military base, and it's on a much more personal, intense level when you talk about schools," stresses Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, in *Education Week*.

The Pittsburgh school system has had more than 50 public meetings and community forums since November to determine the final Right-Sizing Plan for implementation.

Among some of the changes to be made under the comprehensive plan:

- Three schools and one program will be relocated;
- Ten schools expand to K-8 schools;

- Eight schools become accelerated learning academies; and
- Early childhood education programs expand.

Board President Bill Isler is especially pleased to have early childhood services expanded. "The district is committed to serving 3-year-old and 4-year-old children at a critical stage in their learning," he emphasizes.

Broward District Wins Award In Communications

Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale recently won a crisis communications award at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conference in recognition of its performance during last year's hurricanes.

The school district received the NTI Award of Honor in Hurricane Communications -- "Grace Under Fire" -- for providing leadership and communications to lead staff, students, parents and the public through the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma.

The award is the result of a new partnership among the AASA, National School Public Relations Association and The NTI Group, which is involved with the manufacture and delivery of electronic notification systems.

A \$10,000 endowment is included with the award, which will aid students planning a communications major in college.

College Board To Open School In Buffalo

When James Williams took the reins of New York's Buffalo Public Schools last July, he made the traditional newcomer rounds of community meetings, church services, and dinners with public officials.

It didn't take long for him to get the message that there were only a few high schools in Buffalo that were top choices for parents and students.



James Williams

As a result, one of the first promises Williams made to the district was to create high schools of excellence in every part of the city, according to Heather Groll, special assistant to the superintendent for community relations.

His conversations with longtime colleagues in education led to a visit to the district from College Board officials, resulting in a recent announcement that a College Board School will be located in Buffalo.

With support from two foundations, the College Board opened its first small, secondary school to serve low-income and minority students in grades six through 12 in 2004 in New York City. In 2005, it opened three more College Board Schools in New York, aimed to prepare students for college, especially those in urban areas.

It recently announced that four more schools -- three in New York City and one in Buffalo -- will open this fall. The College Board plans to create up to 18 public schools in grades six to 12.

continued on page 12

Inside the Council

Pictorial of 2006 Legislative Conference



Council Executive Director Michael Casserly presents Council chair and San Francisco superintendent emeritus Arlene Ackerman an award for her outstanding leadership at the Council.



Memphis Superintendent Carol Johnson, left, chats with Hillsborough County (Tampa) Superintendent MaryEllen Elia.



Atlanta Superintendent Beverly Hall makes a point at legislative briefing as school board chair Kathleen Patillo looks on.



San Diego board members John de Beck and Sheila Jackson attentive to legislative talks.



Jackson Superintendent Earl Watkins shares his views during the legislative conference.



Anchorage Superintendent Carol Comeau addresses the Council legislative staff at a session.

Photos by Alex Jones

Who Votes For Federal Education Funding -- And Who Does Not?

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

Enough with the rhetoric, the spin, and the excuses. Let's look at the votes!

After three years of eroding increases in federal funding for elementary and secondary education, President Bush proposed to cut the budget for the U.S. Department of Education in FY2006, and Congress followed suit with reductions in virtually every federal K-12 program from *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Now in the FY2007 budget, President Bush and the House and Senate Budget Committees are poised for further cuts in education funding.

The battlefield is not without its heroes, however. Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA) have rallied hundreds of national education and health organizations to coalesce around an initiative to add back \$7 billion into the education and health budget areas, restoring funding to FY2005 levels. On a 73-27 vote, the Senate overwhelmingly adopted the \$7 billion Specter-Harkin amendment to the FY2007 budget.

The strong support in the Senate for increasing the FY2007 federal education and health budget featured some prominent "yes" votes, including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Appropriations Chairman Thad Cochran, and Senate Appropriations Ranking Minority Member Robert Byrd. To be fair and balanced, it should be noted that some of the 73 senators who voted in favor of the Specter-Harkin amendment also voted to cut education funding in FY2006. None-



LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

theless, this notable level of bipartisan support for increasing FY2007 federal education funding raises serious questions about what the other 27 senators were thinking of when they voted against the Specter-Harkin measure.

The 27 United States senators voting against the bipartisan Specter-Harkin amendment to increase the education and health budget for FY2007 were:

Allard (R-CO)	Craig (R-ID)
Allen (R-VA)	Crapo (R-ID)
Bond (R-MO)	DeMint (R-SC)
Brownback (R-KS)	Ensign (R-NV)
Bunning (R-KY)	Enzi (R-WY)
Burr (R-NC)	Graham (R-SC)
Chambliss (R-GA)	Gregg (R-NH)
Coburn (R-OK)	Inhofe (R-OK)
Cornyn (R-TX)	Isakson (R-GA)
Kyl (R-AZ)	
Martinez (R-FL)	
McCain (R-AZ)	
McConnell (R-KY)	
Sessions (R-AL)	
Shelby (R-AL)	
Sununu (R-NH)	
Thomas (R-WY)	
Vitter (R-LA)	

In the House of Representatives, Congressman Michael Castle (R-DE) has also rallied national education and health organizations behind a similar \$7 billion amendment, jointly sponsored with Representatives Nancy Johnson (R-CT), Dave Reichert (R-WA), Robert Simmons (R-CT), Jim Ramstad (R-MN), and Todd Platts (R-PA). Another education and health amendment by Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) was rejected by the House Budget Committee, and the outcome of the Castle amendment awaits House floor consideration of the budget until after the mid-April congressional recess.

Continued from page 7

Boston, NYC...

those in large urban districts that serve so many of our children," said Eli Broad, founder of The Broad Foundation.

The five districts were chosen among 100 urban school systems nationwide eligible for the award, with the selection based on a rigorous review of data.

A fifth-time finalist, the Boston public school district "continues to do what some say is impossible – improve students' performance, regardless of their race or family income," stressed Broad in a news release.

The New York City school system has been named a finalist for the second year. "All of us involved in the public schools of New York – students, parents, teachers, administrators and all staff – should be very proud of this, our second nomination as a Broad finalist," said New York Schools Chancellor Joel Klein.

The winning district will be selected by a group of educational researchers and educators who conduct site visits to each of the finalist school districts.

Virginia's Norfolk Public Schools won the Broad Prize last year.

Continued from page 6

Nebraska...

A few days before the Nebraska legislature voted on the district breakup, the Council of the Great City Schools issued a statement announcing that it will move its annual conference, scheduled to be held in Omaha in 2008, to another venue outside of Nebraska if the bill passed.

The Council is now mobilizing other national organizations, including civil rights groups, to draw attention to what Executive Director Michael Casserly calls an action that creates racially segregated systems that are "contrary to the American ideal."

Orlando Students Spend Spring Break Helping with Katrina Relief

Spring break for most Florida high school students involves soaking up some rays at the beach or just enjoying a week away from school.

But for 46 students at Olympia High School in Orlando, Fla., this year's spring break held a special meaning. While their peers were on vacation, they were in New Orleans, aiding in the rebuilding effort of the city devastated by Hurricane Katrina.



Bryce Muller, grade 10, left, and Mahogany Gordon, grade 9, work to repair a room at Capdau Charter School in New Orleans.

The trip was the brainchild of two Olympia teachers, Takumi Sato and Stephanie Johnson-Possell, and was coordinated in conjunction with Tulane University's alternative spring break program.

Once the trip was announced, so many students signed up that a waiting list had to be created.

Funding for the trip -- to cover expenses ranging from student insurance to goodie bags packed with granola bars-- was provided by Olympia High's Parent Teacher Student Association. Donations also poured in from local businesses and individuals.

Once the students arrived in New Orleans, their first assignment was to remove debris from a neighborhood in a severely damaged section of the city. This experience gave them their first look at the devastation caused by the hurricane, as they saw tattered family photo albums and personal belongings strewn about.

Their work was very much appreciated by the local residents, many of whom hadn't seen anyone come to help in their neighborhood in six months.

"People wouldn't stop saying thank you as they drove past," said 10th grader Lauren Rinaldi. "It felt good that they appreciated what we were doing."

For the next three days, the students worked at the K-8 Capdau Charter School, one of the few schools open in the city, where they moved furniture and prepared two rooms for painting.

The trip also provided students the opportunity to soak up the culture and history of New Orleans. The group met with local residents and toured historical landmarks, such as the Destrehan Plantation where they ate a home cooked jam-balaya dinner after a long day of work.

"They learned so much more than they could in a classroom by experiencing the devastation and despair as well as gaining a deeper appreciation for life," said Sato.

And the students returned from New Orleans with so much enthusiasm for volunteering, they have formed a community service club.

"In coming to New Orleans, we each showed support and brought hope to the people of this city," 11th grader Kara Jordan wrote in a journal she kept during the trip. "And they in turn gave us insight into their lives. And the spirit of their culture... has given me so much respect and even more gratitude for the things I have."

Story reported by Rebekah Sheppard, 9th grade student at Olympia High, in Orlando.

Hurricane Katrina Survivor Now Teaches in Omaha

Patricia King is a paraprofessional at Central Park Elementary in Omaha, Neb., but for this former teacher from New Orleans, the journey to Omaha was a harrowing experience.

A long-time resident of New Orleans, King was used to hurricane season.

In fact, she didn't realize how dangerous Hurricane Katrina was until overnight, when the water rose to the top floor in her house. The neighbor's family was with her at the time, and carrying the children on their shoulders in water up to their necks, the group made their way to higher ground.

"I never thought this could happen in real life," said King in an interview with the school district's newsletter, *OPS News*. "It was devastating. The water was unimaginable."

Eventually, the group made its way to a highway, and slept overnight to ensure a spot on a bus to the Houston AstroDome.

Once in Houston, King decided to resettle in Omaha, a place she had visited only once, but where she thought she could make a life for herself.

King arrived in Omaha in September, and with the help of a friend, found a house and a job at Central Park Elementary, where she is very happy.

"I love it here," said King in the *OPS News*. "The kids are great and the teachers have been so welcoming."

King returned to New Orleans to retrieve some of her belongings, but after witnessing the devastation left behind by Hurricane Katrina, is grateful for her new life in Omaha.

Urban Schools Win ‘Grammy Awards’

The Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C., was recently recognized for its strong commitment to music education with a \$15,000 award from the GRAMMY Foundation.

Continued from page 2
Baltimore Wins...

ment, corrective action, and restructuring of public schools.”

In an editorial, the Baltimore *Sun* criticized the governor’s veto. “Gov. Robert Ehrlich Jr. has insisted that Baltimore’s schoolchildren have not received their constitutional rights to an adequate education – and he’s right. But the constitutional outrage is that the city is not receiving its fair share of state school aid.”

The Maryland General Assembly imposed a one-year moratorium on the state’s takeover plan. After the final vote, Baltimore school board chairman Brian Morris reportedly said, “The only thing that counts will be how well and how quickly we achieve our academic goals....”

The school was one of 42 schools nationwide that have been designated as GRAMMY Signature Schools for their outstanding music programs.

The Duke Ellington School received the GRAMMY Signature Schools Enterprise Award, which recognizes schools that are economically underserved.

In addition, urban schools in Dallas, Houston and Las Vegas were selected as “Gold” recipients and received a \$5,000 award to benefit their music programs.

Big-city schools in Seattle, Jacksonville, Fla., and Long Beach, Calif., were awarded a \$1,000 gift, with the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville receiving an additional \$5,000 grant to benefit its guitar and piano program.

Sponsored by 7 UP, the GRAMMY Signature Schools program was established in 1989 to honor public high schools that have top music programs.

Continued from page 8
College Board...

In Buffalo, the new Math, Science & Technology Preparatory School at Seneca will be housed at the former Seneca High School, which had been closed along with other school buildings because of shrinking student enrollment.

Groll indicates that there will be “high expectations for students in the program.”

In August, 160 students in grades six and nine will attend a summer program at Buffalo State College that will include mathematics, science, and study skills to prepare them for the new school.

Then in September, they become the first students at the new Math Science & Technology Preparatory School at Seneca. They will be expected to take advanced classes, work on research projects with scientists, and attend extra classes after school and in the summer, leading to graduation and preparation for college.



Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 702
Washington, D.C. 20004

PRESORT
First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Washington, D.C.
Permit No. 251