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## Council Releases Three New Reports

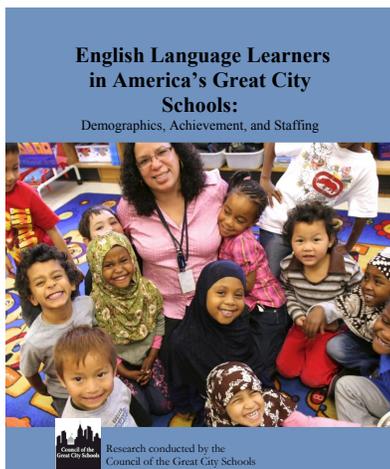
Two new reports on English language learners, one focusing on enrollment and programs while the other on instructional materials, and a survey on the characteristics and roles of school-principal supervisors have been released by the Council of the Great City Schools.

*English Language Learners in America's Great City Schools: Demographics, Achievement and Staffing* presents the results of a yearlong study to gather data on the fastest-growing demographic group in the nation's schools.

"The overall picture painted in the report suggests that there are numerous programs and activities in place to improve the academic attainment of ELLs but that considerable work remains to bring these students to parity with their non-ELL peers," the report concludes.

The study found that "ELL staffing and programming was largely not well integrated with other instructional initiatives,

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U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addresses big-city school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools' recent Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.

## Education Secretary, Federal Officials, Congressman Address Urban School Leaders

Arne Duncan has been the U.S. secretary of education since 2009 and after serving in the position for four years, he believes the nation is on the right track when it comes to education.

"I'm pleased at the progress we are making as a country," Duncan told urban school leaders assembled in Washington, D.C., for the Council of the Great City Schools' recent Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.

The secretary noted that for the first time in history the nation is on track to have a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020, with graduation rates up significantly among minority populations. He also cited statistics that there are 700,000 fewer

young people in high school dropout factories compared to just a couple of years ago and college enrollment rates are ticking up.

"As [big-city school districts] move, the country moves," said Duncan, praising urban school systems for their progress. But he believes there is still room for significant improvement. "We have a long way to go, and now is not time to rest on our laurels," Duncan stressed.

### **Sequestration Impact**

During his address to urban school leaders, the nation's ninth secretary of education discussed the damage automatic

**Legislative Conference** continued on page 4

# Urban Schools Get Boost in Art Education

Students at Findley Elementary School in Des Moines, Iowa, recently had a new teacher: Oscar-winning actor Forest Whitaker. He was at the school as part of Findley's participation in the President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities Turnaround Arts Initiative.

Findley was one of eight schools selected last year by the Committee to participate in the program, whose aim is to narrow the achievement gap and improve student engagement through the arts.

Research has found that providing students with arts education leads to increased academic achievement and school engagement. As a result, many urban school districts are increasing their arts programming.



Actor Forest Whitaker works with students at Findley Elementary School in Des Moines, Iowa, as part of the school's participation in the Turnaround Arts program. Whitaker will be working with students at the school over the course of two years to support their educational reform effort.

## Seattle Arts Plan

One of those districts is Seattle Public Schools, which recently launched a districtwide arts plan.

The plan was funded through a \$1-million arts education planning grant the district received two years ago from the Wallace Foundation.

Under the plan, every school will have at least two certified arts specialists; there will be an increase of integrated learning in arts and non-arts classes; and new partnerships will be created between schools and community organizations that deepen student arts learning experiences.

The implementation of the plan will be led by the district and the City of Seattle

Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs and funded by a combined effort among the school district, the City of Seattle and local and national funders. The arts plan will be carried out as a pilot in several schools and will be evaluated for its effectiveness and impact on students, before it is implemented districtwide.

**Art Education** *continued on page 6*



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# New School Leaders Named in Five Urban School Districts

An inner-city elementary school principal has been tapped to take the reins of the San Diego Unified School District following Superintendent Bill Kowba's late February announcement that he plans to retire June 30.

It didn't take long for the San Diego school board to select his successor.

But what may have been surprising is that the board elevated one of its elementary school principals to take the helm of California's second largest school system.

Cindy Marten, principal of Central Elementary School in an economically disadvantaged area of San Diego, has been named superintendent-designate of the 133,180-student school system – monumentally bigger than the 850 students she has overseen as school principal.

She is known for pushing reforms at her school and going above and beyond to improve education for her students.

"...I am taking this job because I want to save public education in America," she said in the San Diego *Union-Tribune* about becoming superintendent. She has a 25-year career in education.

Superintendent Kowba has led the San Diego Unified School District since 2010. His tenure has been marked by an expansion of technology available to students and advances in student academic achievement.

In another transition, Alaska's Anchorage school board recently named a new schools leader after Superintendent Jim Browder announced his retirement, effective in mid-June. Chief Academic Officer Ed Graff will step up to head the 50,000-student Anchorage

Ed Graff

School District.



Cindy Marten

School District.

Since he began as an elementary-school teacher in the Anchorage school system in 1991, Graff has worked his way up the career ladder to become a school principal, executive director of elementary education and now head of instruction since 2009.

Browder, who has served as superintendent since last July, is departing because of family medical issues.

"I want to thank Dr. Browder for the hard work

he's done," said Board President Jeannie Mackie in a press release. "We've seen a lot of great things happening in the district this year and it is unfortunate he could not stay longer to see the positive outcomes of his efforts."

Another superintendent also stepped down recently for a family medical issue. Superintendent Dwight Jones of the Clark County School District in Las Vegas resigned after nearly two and a half years at the helm of the nation's fifth largest school district.

"I'm saddened by our superintendent's sudden departure from the district, but fully understand the need to be with his mother and family – and I applaud him for having his priorities in the right order," said School Board of Trustees President Carolyn Edwards. "... I am proud of the reform work we have done and the results we have seen. We will ensure the good work Mr. Jones started here continues to move forward..." she added.

The board named Deputy Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky as the interim superintendent to continue with Clark County school district reforms championed by Jones.

In another development, the school board in Indianapolis has appointed Peggy Hinckley as the interim superintendent to take the reins from retiring Superintendent

Eugene White. She retired last year as the superintendent of Indiana's Warren Township Schools.

## Staying the Course



Linda Lane

The Pittsburgh school board recently decided it wants to retain Superintendent Linda Lane as the leader of Pittsburgh Public Schools in a three-year agreement that extends her tenure

through June 2016. She was initially appointed to the post in late 2010.

"We are very pleased with the steadfast leadership Superintendent Lane has provided during some of the most challenging times facing public education," said board member Theresa Colaizzi. "It was important for us to ensure that stable leadership remained in place..."

And in Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools, the school board decided to appoint Interim Superintendent Thomas Ahart to lead the 32,000-student school system.



Thomas Ahart

"We had three strong, experienced candidates for this position – anyone of

whom could have been a successful leader for our district – but in the end the very best was right here at home," said School Board Chair Dick Murphy in a press statement.

"My goal as superintendent is straightforward: we will be recognized as the best urban school district in America," said Superintendent Ahart.

He has been interim chief of the school system since last May after serving as associate superintendent for a little less than a year. Earlier, he was principal of Harding Middle School for three years in Des Moines.

**Legislative Conference** *continued from page 1*

across-the-board federal spending cuts, known as sequestration, will do to education funding.

“It’s mind-boggling to me that kids will be hurt,” said Duncan. “But there is nothing I can do differently in terms of cutting money from programs.”

He explained to educators that sequestration will cut approximately \$725 million from Title 1 programs, which provides money to high-poverty schools, and \$600 million will be cut from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The secretary said that these cuts will be especially damaging because special education is already underfunded.

According to Duncan, the impact of these cuts could range from a loss of 10,000 seats in the Head Start program to less money for work-study programs for college students, which may lead to students dropping out of college.

The secretary urged leaders in big-city school districts to tell their story of how the sequestration will impact their school systems, such as having to hand out layoff notices to staff.

“Don’t suffer in silence,” stressed Duncan. “Be very public about what this means to students, communities and families.”

During his tenure as education secretary, Duncan noted that his biggest frustration has been the failure of policymakers to pass immigration reform. He believes that the nation has to pass legislation on this issue and that some form of the Dream Act has to be included. “[This failure] is not just hurting our communities but our country,” said Duncan.

Before becoming the U.S. secretary of education, Duncan served as the chief executive officer of Chicago Public Schools. He recalled that during his time at the helm the district lost a child approximately every two weeks to gun violence.

So he is not new to the issue of gun violence, but the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., hit him particularly hard.

He noted that 2,000 Americans have been killed since Sandy Hook due to gun



**Congressman Chaka Fattah**

violence and that there is a real sense of urgency in the country to get things done.

The secretary said that the goal is not only to have fewer children being shot dead, but also to have less children growing up in fear.

“We need to have criminal background checks, but also find a common sense middle ground,” said Duncan. “We are committed to try and get those things done.”

### **Rigorous Standards**

During a question-and-answer session, a school board member noted that the transition to the rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will lead to lower test scores in his district and wanted to know, “How are we going to communicate to parents about Common Core assessments?”

Duncan noted that the situation in the board member’s district was not unique and that what his district is going through, the country is going through.

“But as hard as this change is, the vast majority of states and districts have been lying to parents,” said Duncan, “by telling them [their children] are academically ready and they are not.”

He said that CCSS involves a massive amount of change and it is vital that districts communicate to teachers as well as parents about the new standards.

“I worry about a backlash,” Duncan admitted to big-city school leaders. “It’s going to be a hard and choppy couple of years, but we have to stay the course.”

### **A Focus on Equity**

Also addressing the conference was Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.), who had spent his morning meeting with 100 of the leading business chief executive officers in Philadelphia. They discussed with him the challenges of developing a highly skilled workforce able to compete with countries such as India and China.

The congressman said that the United States has for decades acted as if it had no competition in attracting the best and brightest workers.

“The people we as a nation are competing with now are very serious,” said Fattah. “This country has turned a blind eye to disparity that exists and the disproportionate failure that exists in our schools.”

He noted that in wealthier areas of the country class sizes are often 16 or smaller and teachers have graduate degrees; the exact opposite of what one may find in an urban school.

“There is going to be a differential outcome,” said Fattah, when you have these glaring disparities in the nation.

The congressman noted that there are 200,000 manufacturing jobs in Philadelphia and that 700 of those jobs have been vacant for more than six months because of the need to find workers with the math skills necessary to do the work required.

He said that in many urban school districts teachers did not major or minor in the subjects they are teaching.

“We can’t have young people taught math if we don’t have qualified math teachers,” the congressman acknowledged.

Fattah, who serves on the House Appropriations Committee, said that the nation can no longer afford a third of our children living in the shadow of opportunity, and noted that he often hears people try to make the case that money doesn’t make a difference in education.

“If money doesn’t make a difference, then we should make it more equitably distributed,” Fattah emphasized.

**Legislative Conference** *continued on page 5*

Legislative Conference *continued from page 4*



White House's Roberto Rodriguez

### Obama's Preschool Priority

Conferees also heard from Roberto Rodriguez, special assistant to the president for education.

He said that President Obama views the strength of the nation's education system as an economic strategy and noted that the Common Core State Standards combined with Race to the Top are setting a high bar across states and that there needs to be a rethinking of teaching and learning to reach high standards.

Rodriguez said that too often schools are not equipped with sufficient technology and often what's missing is a link between employment and what's occurring in schools.

"The president's 2020 goal is to lead the world in highest proportion of college graduates by 2020," said Rodriguez.

According to Rodriguez, in the United States only three out of 10 children are participating in high quality preschool activities and said that the Obama Administration is looking at making new investments in preschool because studies show that there is a high return on investment in early childhood education.

"The president believes that zip code should never predetermine access to high quality preschool education," said Rodriguez.

He said that the Administration has announced a new program to not only provide high quality preschool, particularly for low-income children, but provide greater access to full-day kindergarten. "The objective is to not invent the wheel," said Rodriguez, but close the school readiness gap.

In addition to boosting early childhood education, Rodriguez said President Obama has also emphasized the need to think critically about high school education and to make sure students are on track to receive a high school diploma and get a great job.

"We need to better equip our young people for the demands of the high tech economy," said Rodriguez. "We need to graduate communicators and critical thinkers," he added.

Deborah Delisle, the assistant secretary of education for elementary and secondary education for the U.S. Department of Education, added to the conversation by addressing key initiatives and sharing anecdotes of her travels to schools across the country.

A critical initiative included the Administration's plans to increase participation rates by providing free access for preschool children whose families are at or below the 200 percent poverty level.

Delisle also discussed the disparities in education she views firsthand when she travels to schools across the country.

She recalled visiting two schools in one day: a middle school

and an elementary school. At the middle school, which had received about \$2.5 million in School Improvement Grant funds, students in a 7th-grade class had "built" their own computers by cutting and pasting pictures of computers and keyboards on large construction paper.

About three miles down the road, Delisle visited an elementary school undergoing a turnaround and found a different school climate.

A third-grade classroom had two teachers and every student had an iPad, with two students sharing a laptop. One of the teachers had given them a QR code used to access online information, and to answer the question: "How can one person alter the face of history?"

Delisle recalled that the students were very energetic as they had to decide how and when to use the iPad versus their laptop as they worked on creating a five-minute presentation.

Delisle told conferees that every kid in America should have a QR code instead of a cutout.

"It's all about getting the kids to the QR codes,"

said Delisle. "It's all about ensuring that every student has an opportunity to engage in that kind of instruction..."



Education Department's Deborah Delisle



Singer Alice Cooper's bassist Chuck Garric (center) with students from the Lloyd Barbee Montessori School in Milwaukee. Garric told the students to say "Rock n Roll" before the photo was taken.

**Art Education** continued from page 2

## Arts Programs Spreading

In an effort to ensure that every student receives a high quality arts education, the nation's third largest school district has launched the Chicago Public Schools Education Plan.

The five goals of the plan are: create district-level polices that support the arts; develop district arts curriculum; provide professional development in the arts to principals and teachers; support strategic partnerships and collaboration in the arts; and use data to drive decision-making for arts instruction and programming.

South Carolina's Charleston County School District is also increasing access to the arts with a public-private education partnership called Engaging Creative Minds (ECM).

The program will provide arts-infused curriculum training and opportunities at eight pilot elementary schools.

ECM is structured to increase student access to learning through the arts and close the achievement gap by providing equal access to quality creative learning opportunities.

ECM is being funded with the help of public and private funding, including the Boeing Company, Target and the South Carolina Arts Commission.

And in Milwaukee, an after-school arts program has received support from a professional musician.

The Lloyd Barbee Montessori School, where more than 80 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, has an after-school arts program that offers visual arts, dance, drama and even Spanish instruction.

The program has been so successful that the school would like to expand the program to five days a week and add musical instrument lessons.

Chuck Garric, a bassist for well-known rock singer Alice Cooper, heard about the program and decided to organize a concert and online auction with all of the proceeds going to the after-school arts program.

"Music has definitely been important in my life and has taken me all around the world," said Garric. "I just wanted to give these kids a chance to see what is inside of them, to fall in love with music and just let them know that there's other people who care about them."

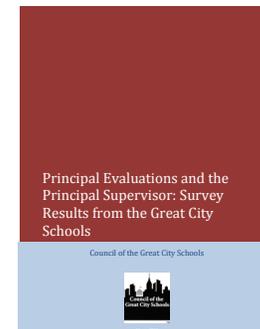
The fundraiser was successful, raising \$5,000 for the after-school arts program.

**New Reports** continued from page 1

professional development activities, staffing, or funding."

*Instructional Materials for English Language Learners in Urban Public Schools, 2012-13* is an analysis of the quality and accessibility of instructional materials for ELL students in the nation's big-city school districts.

"As states and school districts continue the process of implementing the Common Core State Standards, developing high-quality and accessible instructional materials for ELLs that are aligned with the common core should be a priority for all," the report stresses. "The current state of instructional materials for ELLs is an impediment to this goal."



With a grant from the Wallace Foundation, the Council conducted a study to look into the ways school principals are supported and evaluated in big-city school systems, culminating in *Principal Evaluations and the Principal Supervisor: Survey Results from the Great City Schools*.

"The results of this first-of-its-kind survey of urban school systems point to the fact that principal supervisors play an increasingly important role in supporting principals and improving student achievement," says the report. "In short, the role of the principal supervisor is evolving in urban school districts."

The report notes that individuals who serve as principal supervisors typically have prior experience as school principals, principal coaches and teachers.

The three reports can be accessed on the Council's web site at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

## Urban School Leaders Briefed On Federal School Safety Efforts

When the tragic shooting occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., on the morning of December 14, the U.S. Department of Education began working that afternoon on how to provide immediate as well as long-term assistance not only to Sandy Hook Elementary, but schools across the nation.

At the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, urban educators heard from an official in the Education Department as well as an official in the Justice Department on efforts by the Obama Administration to reduce gun violence and improve school safety.

David Esquith, the director of the Office of Safe and Healthy Students at the Department of Education, told conferees that the department has developed several initiatives to tackle the issue.

The first initiative is ensuring that every school has a comprehensive emergency management plan. Esquith noted that an unfortunate response to the tragedy in Newtown has been school personnel conducting drills with inadequate training and scaring people unnecessarily.

"People need to be well trained before you drill," said Esquith "or what you will have is chaos."

He said the Department will come out in May with a guide on how to create and implement comprehensive emergency management plans for schools that includes four phases of emergency management: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The guide will also provide information for training staff as well as students.

Esquith said that President Obama has proposed \$30 million for state education agencies to provide training and technical assistance to local school districts, but that funding is dependent on Congress. He also advised school district officials to visit the Department's web site, [www.rems.ed.gov](http://www.rems.ed.gov), for materials on emergency management



**Council Director of Legislation Jeff Simering, right, introduces Education Department official David Esquith and Justice Department official Sandra Webb.**

plans.

In 2002, the U.S. Secret Service conducted a study on school shootings and found that the greatest deterrent to gun violence in schools is to improve school climate.

The study found that school shootings are not impulsive acts but are often planned out in advance and the perpetrators often tell fellow students or display warning signs. According to the study, if students have a trusting relationship with an adult in school, they are more likely to tell them about impending violent incidents.

"Many violent acts are deterred as a result of students talking to adults," said Esquith, who said that the Department is working to provide school districts with tools to assess school climate.

Another important component of the Department's effort is making sure students get treatment for mental health issues. Officials are working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services to improve and promote school-based mental health services through a program called Project Aware. The Obama Administration has proposed \$55 million to fund the program; with \$15 million for mental health first-aid training for educators and \$40 million to ensure students get services for their mental health needs.

**Safety Efforts** continued on page 12

## Council Passes Resolution to Stop Gun Violence

When U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed urban school leaders recently, the Council of the Great City Schools handed him a gun-violence resolution that minutes earlier had been passed by the organization's Board of Directors.

The Council wanted to share its "horror and dread" that it felt as a result of the deadly December shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

"Families and children in urban, rural, suburban and every school location deserve the assurance and satisfaction of knowing that students are in a safe learning environment," the resolution emphasizes.

The Council calls for "immediate changes that will help ensure students across the country are safe in their schools, classrooms and communities," listing a dozen recommendations. They include:

- Providing support for mental-health and substance-abuse treatment and counseling;
- Beefing up bullying-prevention programs, anti-gang initiatives and positive-behavior support programs; and
- Tightening the rating systems on movies, games and other forms of entertainment that depict violence.

The gun-violence resolution, which also calls for a ban of military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips and magazines, can be accessed on the Council's web site at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

## Nashville School District Treats Families As 'Customers' in One-Stop Shop

In 2004, Tennessee's Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools took a page from the business community to consider families as "customers" in response to resolving and preventing complaints.

There was reportedly no clear path to information or services, with a variety of phone numbers, locations and people available to respond to family concerns.

The school district had to find a better way to connect with families, respond to their concerns and manage problems.

"That's why we made the decision to follow the lead of the business world by creating a customer service center for our external and internal customers," says Mark Chamberlain, manager of the Metro Nashville school system's Customer Service Center.

The district consolidated the work of its various departments that had already worked directly with "customers" to move the function to one central department responsible for virtually all customer contacts for central offices.

"There was no additional employee cost to the new Customer Service Center," Chamberlain emphasizes. "Moving positions took the contact work out of individual departments, leaving them more time to focus on core issues."

As a result, the former school teacher notes, "Customers received a consistent, efficient and timely response with every contact. And even more importantly, they always receive a live person!"

Just recently, the superintendent, assistant superintendent and a board member from Tennessee's Shelby County Schools in Memphis visited the Nashville school district's one-stop Customer Service Center.

"Schools have long realized parents are needed partners in education, but there is a pervasive reluctance to consider stakeholders as customers or that service is a part of our business," Chamberlain points out.

"Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools is transforming the work of its central offic-

es to a role that explicitly supports schools – one of its internal customer groups – and student achievement."

The bottom line in Chamberlain's estimation is that the school district needs "to treat {taxpayers} as customers and provide services and information like we mean business."

## Top Magnet Schools Named

For the second year in a row, Miami-Dade County Public Schools had more of its schools recognized as among the top magnet schools in the nation than any other school district.

Eighteen of its schools received the Magnet School of Excellence Award.

Sponsored by the Magnet Schools of America, the organization presents the Magnet School of Excellence Award to magnet schools that show a commitment to high academic standards, curriculum innovation, successful desegregation/diversity effort, specialized teaching staffs and parent and community involvement.

Schools in Miami-Dade were not the only big-city schools to receive an Excellence Award. In addition, 10 schools in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; 10 in Tampa's Hillsborough County Public Schools; eight in Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas; three in Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale and three in Indianapolis Public Schools received awards.

And the Los Angeles Unified School District and Louisiana's East Baton Rouge Parish School System had two schools honored while Chicago Public Schools had one school recognized.

The winning schools were selected from a field of approximately 250 schools and had to submit an application that was scored by a panel of educators.

## Council Appoints New Director Of Research



Ray Hart

Raymond Hart, a research and evaluation veteran of more than 20 years, has been named director of research of the Council of the Great City Schools, succeeding longtime and retiring leader

Sharon Lewis.

Hart's work spans policy areas such as postsecondary success and college readiness, professional learning communities and school improvement, teacher effectiveness and value-added analysis, early childhood education and adult and workforce literacy.

He recently led the Analytic Technical Support Task for the mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory. He has also served as the executive director of research, planning and accountability for the Atlanta Public Schools, and president and CEO of RS Hart and Partners, an evaluation and assessment consulting firm. Moreover, he has been an assistant professor of research, measurement and statistics at Georgia State University.

"We are pleased to have such a leader in the field of educational research and evaluation to support our efforts to improve teaching and learning in urban school systems," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Hart holds a doctoral degree in evaluation and measurement from Kent State University.

Lewis has been director of the Council's research operation since 2009, but had also led the department from 1997 to 2006.

## Chicago Plans Transition For Students Departing Underutilized Schools

When the news broke on March 21 that Chicago plans to close some 54 schools, buried under the headlines was how the nation's third largest school system is going to transition reportedly 30,000 students who would be affected by the shutdowns.

Chicago Public Schools Chief Executive Officer Barbara Byrd-Bennett proposed a series of new investments to create a quality 21<sup>st</sup> Century education for students currently enrolled in the 54 underutilized schools and programs slated for closure.



Barbara Byrd-Bennett

"Every child in every neighborhood in Chicago deserves access to a high quality education that prepares them to succeed in life, but for too long children in certain parts of Chicago have been cheated out of the resources they need to succeed because they are in underutilized, under-resourced schools," she said in a press statement.

"As a former teacher and a principal, I've lived through school closings and I know that this will not be easy, but I also know that in the end this will benefit our children," the schools CEO added.

As part of an initiative to provide high-quality education to students departing underutilized schools, Byrd-Bennett announced 19 new International Baccalaureate (IB) Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and fine arts programs to be established in what the school system calls "welcoming schools."

All welcoming schools will receive academic and capital supports based on their individual needs.

The school system plans to redirect resources from closing schools for investments in the welcoming schools to include nearly 70 additional libraries and comput-

er, engineering, media and science labs that are not currently offered in the 54 underutilized schools and programs.

Other improvements include air conditioning in every classroom of the welcoming schools, a Safe Passage program to provide safety and security for displaced students going to and leaving their new schools, and iPads for all students in grades 3-8 entering schools prepared to receive them.

"Now is the time to make smart investments alongside tough decisions to ensure our students can reach their bright futures," said Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Our students cannot wait for us to put off these difficult decisions any longer."

The Chicago public school system enrolls more than 400,000 students in 681 schools in the Windy City.

## Des Moines District Tops In Energy Use

Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools has earned the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year Award for the second consecutive year, making it the only school district in the nation to be a repeat recipient of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) award.

EPA's annual ENERGY STAR Award honors organizations that have made outstanding contributions to protecting the environment through energy efficiency.

Through its partnership with the ENERGY STAR program, the Des Moines school district has achieved important reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

The school system has also saved \$2.4 million in energy costs since 2007 with its energy-saving efforts such as installing software that automatically turns off all of the district's more than 15,000 computers.

**Des Moines** continued on page 12

## NYC Announces Programs to Meet Higher Standards

The nation's largest school district is leading the way in implementing the Common Core State Standards, with the district recently selecting new high-quality curriculum options for grades K through 8 that are aligned to the new standards, adopted by 45 states and Washington, D.C., to ensure students graduate from high school both college and career ready.

According to district officials, New York City is one of the first large urban school districts in the nation to select programs aligned to the new standards.

Last year, the authors of the Common Core State Standards released a set of guidelines designed to guide vendors in aligning their instructional materials to the Common Core in elementary and middle school.

As one of 30 urban school districts committed to using these criteria to evaluate materials, New York City education officials conducted an intensive research process to find the highest quality programs. Teacher-leaders in the district worked with national experts to evaluate various resources.

Working over the past three school years to support teachers and staff with the transition to the Common Core, the school system is recommending a set of math and English options and will assist principals and teachers as they become familiar with the new materials. The goal is to have the programs in classrooms by the fall.

"New York City is paving the way for other major city school systems across the country by adhering to a rigorous and transparent process for procuring new instructional materials in a way that will ensure publishers deliver the texts we need and teachers realize the full promise of the Common Core State Standards," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

## Richmond Pilot Program Reduces Student Suspensions

At Huguenot High School in Richmond, Va., suspensions have decreased by 19 percent since the school implemented a pilot disciplinary program to improve school climate.

The Community Restorative Service program was designed to address minor behavioral infractions, such as cutting class or cellphone misuse, while reducing both in and out-of-school suspensions for first-time student offenders.

The alternative suspension program uses school-based community service projects to address discipline. With parental permission, students participate in various school improvement projects for community service hours in lieu of in-school or out-of-school suspension. The community service projects can include maintenance of school grounds, classroom and hallway cleaning as well as assisting with media service needs.

The high school also changed its in-school suspension program to an intervention program. Peer mediation, social-skills building, and mini-group discussions teach students de-escalation techniques to avoid repeat offenses.

Another key to transforming the school's climate is a student recognition program that acknowledges students who engage in good citizenship, who have improved in behavior or academic achievements. Students at each grade level have the chance to be recognized publicly and can receive more incentives for continued good behavior and academic progress.

The program has been so successful that officials in Richmond Public Schools are considering implementing the program at other high schools.

"We are very pleased with the declining trend in suspensions at Huguenot and believe we will see even more progress at the end of the year," said Thomas Beatty, executive director of secondary education for Richmond Public Schools.

## D.C. and Clark County Launch Teacher Recruitment Drives

Realizing that teachers are essential to improving school achievement, two urban school districts--the District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C., and Las Vegas' Clark County School District--are embarking on major efforts to attract high-quality teachers.

The Washington, D.C., school system has launched a recruitment campaign focused on attracting qualified teachers and principals from across the nation.

The district developed a new recruitment web site, [www.joindcpublicschools.com](http://www.joindcpublicschools.com), featuring more than 20 videos showcasing top teachers, principals and support staff. Additionally, the school system has increased its recruitment team and created "Capital Commitment Fellowship," a pro-

gram for the 50 best teacher recruits of the year.

Although the campaign seeks to bring in new talent, the district is committed to retaining its top educators with competitive salaries and bonuses.

Meanwhile, in the Clark County School District, at least 1,700 teachers are expected to be hired for the 2013-2014 school year resulting in lower class sizes by up to two students a classroom across the community. Adding educators to the classroom is a priority based on anticipated student growth for the school system.

The district is seeking to attract teachers in all subjects, but is specifically looking to attract educators in hard to fill positions such as math, science and special education.



## Oklahoma City Teacher Guest of the President

Pre-kindergarten teacher Susan Bumgarner from the Oklahoma City Public Schools poses with President Obama during his State of the Union address in February. The well-respected early-childhood educator is a nominee for the school system's teacher of the year award, scheduled to be announced in late April. She sat with First Lady Michelle Obama during the president's address to Congress.

# Pictorial of 2013 Legislative Conference



Congressman Chaka Fattah (center) gets a warm welcome from Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite and Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.



San Francisco Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza and board member Jill Wynns listen intently during a conference session.



Los Angeles Schools Superintendent John Deasy makes a point during the Legislative Conference.



Education Secretary Arne Duncan (center) poses with the Council's leadership, left to right, past Council Chair Winston Brooks, Chair-elect Eugene White, Chair Candy Olson and Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.



Virginia's Richmond Schools Superintendent Yvonne Brandon asks Assistant Secretary of Education Deborah Delisle a question.

**Photos by Alex Jones**



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**Safety Efforts** *continued from page 7*

The fourth initiative is in the area of school safety. The Obama Administration has proposed \$150 million to train 5,000 additional school personnel such as resource officers, social workers and guidance counselors. “We want school districts to decide what their needs are and customize them to their schools,” said Esquith.

Big-city school leaders also heard from Sandra Webb, the deputy director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Webb told urban educators that COPS has established school-based partnerships between law enforcement and school personnel and that the office has funded 6,400 school resource officers.

She said that the COPS Hiring Grants, which help police departments hire officers, can be used by departments to fund school resource officers. Also, for the first time, the Department of Justice will provide an incentive for police departments to hire these officers by giving a preference to grant applications that support school resource officers.

And as a response to the tragedy at

Sandy Hook Elementary, the Department of Justice is developing a model for using school resource officers, who Webb believes can play a unique role in preserving school climate and serving as a liaison between students and police.

“If you want a security guard, this is not it,” said Webb. But she said school resource officers can serve as mentors and be an invaluable resource to urban school districts.

Webb recalled a conversation she had with a school resource officer recently who told her, “I want to be seen as someone who is seen as a resource for children, and get them the help they need. Not arrest them.”

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**Des Moines** *continued from page 9*

Winners of the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year program are selected from about 20,000 partners that participate in the ENERGY STAR program.

Established in 1992, ENERGY STAR was introduced by the EPA as a voluntary market-based partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency.

## Great City Grads



**Angel Taveras**

**Mayor, City of Providence**

**1988 graduate**

**Classical High School**

**Providence Public  
School District**