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Military Veterans Find New Way to Serve

By Henry Duvall

Military veterans are beginning to find another way to serve their country.

With a new initiative launched last March, they are finding career opportunities in serving the nation's urban public school systems – and not just in classroom teaching.

Twenty-five large school districts have signed on to Troops to Education, a collaboration created

by human resource administrators in urban districts through the Council of the Great City Schools.

"Troops to Education solves two problems: teacher shortage and veteran and spouse unemployment issues," says George Ann Rice, a retired associate superintendent of human resources for Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas, in an *Urban Educator* interview.

"Many of the partner districts began the new school year with teacher and support staff vacancies," she explains. "A significant number of military men and women have bachelor's degrees in fields other than education or have job skills and talents needed by districts."

Veterans Day

This past November, a dozen urban school systems in the initiative held their first coordinated event – a Veterans and

Spouses Career Fair near Veterans Day to inform veterans and spouses of the benefits of working in public schools. Not only recruiting for teachers, the districts were also looking to hire instructional aides, bus

drivers, diesel mechanics, security officers, food service workers, IT specialists and more.

In Las Vegas, 80 individuals attended the Troops to Education Veterans

& Spouses Career Fair at Eldorado High School. The Nevada Broadcasters Association



tion produced radio spots in English and Spanish to support the program. And Rice says the initiative received help from the Nevada National Guard and Nellis and Creech Air Force bases in the area.

Some 70 military veterans and spouses participated in the Los Angeles Unified School District's event. Eight are taking state exams for teaching positions and have bachelor's or master's degrees, says Juan Puentes, a talent acquisition specialist in the district's human resources office.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools held a Troops to Education Veterans &

Military Veterans continued on page 4

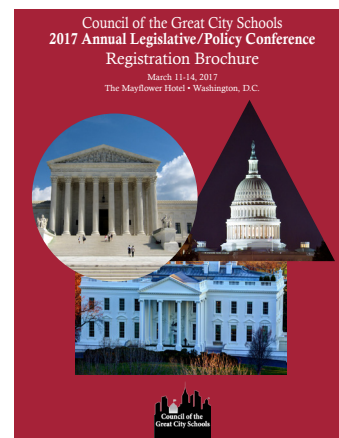
U.S. Education Policy, Legislation To Be Addressed

With the nation's new president and Congress, education priorities for President Donald Trump's administration and legislation on Capitol Hill will be discussed at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 11-14, in Washington.

State plans, federal regulations and guidance for implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will be addressed during the conference at the landmark Mayflower Hotel in the nation's capital.

Discussions will also center on federal education funding in school year 2017-18 as the 115th Congress recently convened.

Conference highlights are on page 7. To register, access www.cgcs.org.



Pearl Harbor Survivors Share History with Honolulu Students

On December 7, the nation held a commemoration ceremony to mark the 75th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii that left more than 2,400 Americans dead and spurred the country into World War II.

For students at Hickam Elementary in Honolulu, the events that occurred that day were brought to life when a group of Pearl Harbor survivors recently visited the school.

As part of the school's Pearl Harbor commemoration activities, the survivors, now in their 90s and known as "The Greatest Generation," met with third, fourth and fifth graders at the school to offer first-hand recollections of the attack and to answer questions aimed at helping the students gain a better understanding of the historic event.

Fourth-grade teacher DeAnna Roose said that the visit meant the world to her students, many who are not from Hawaii but now live near the famous Naval base.

"...They get to meet people who actually survived the attack and get to make that connection first hand," said Roose.

"This is something that they're never going to forget."

One of the survivors who visited the school was Robert Fernandez. He was 17 and serving aboard the USS Curtiss at Pearl Harbor when it was attacked.

The Navy veteran believes it was important to share his personal experiences with the students. "I think it's a wonderful idea and they should know everything they can learn, and they should know what happened," said Fernandez.



A student from Hickam Elementary in Honolulu accompanies a Pearl Harbor survivor to his classroom to speak to students. Photo credit: Hawaii Department of Education



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Superintendents in Cincinnati, Wichita and Fresno Plan to Step Down



Michael Hanson

After nearly 12 years at the helm, California's Fresno Unified School District Superintendent Michael Hanson has announced that he is stepping down in August.

He has overcome numerous challenges and amassed many accomplishments. And he has shared his experiences and know-how with other urban school districts as a member of the Council of the Great City Schools' Executive Committee.

"Michael Hanson's legacy in Fresno is extensive, substantial, and long lasting," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "He has boosted achievement, strengthened the district's financial standing, secured bond approval for new facilities, improved equity, and built enduring relationships across the community. He will be profoundly missed."

Another longtime urban schools superintendent is also stepping down.

After nine years at the helm, Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan plans to retire Aug. 1.

"During Mary's tenure, CPS has made tremendous progress, becoming the highest-performing urban district in the state and extending the district's national reputation for innovative strategies to advance student success," said Cincinnati Board of Education President Ericka Copeland-Dansby in a press statement.

Also departing at the end of the 2016-17 school year will be Wichita Public Schools Superintendent John Allison, who plans to head another Kansas public school system, Olathe Public Schools.

"John has served our community faithfully since 2009, and our school commu-



John Allison

nity is better because of his leadership," said Wichita Board of Education President Sheril Logan. "He will be difficult to replace."

New Charlotte Chief

Clayton Wilcox, superintendent of Washington County Public Schools in Hagerstown, Md., since 2011, has signed a four-year contract to take the helm of North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools on July 1.



Clayton Wilcox

Prior to his tenure in Maryland, the veteran superintendent headed Florida's Pinellas County school system from 2004 to 2008 and Louisiana's East Baton Rouge Parish school district from 2001 to 2004. He has also been an executive at Scholastic, Inc.

He will succeed Superintendent Ann Clark, who has headed Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools since January 2015, after serving in a variety of teaching and administrative posts since 1983.

Tenure Extensions



Meria Carstarphen

The leaders of three urban-school districts recently received contract extensions.

The Atlanta Board of Education voted to extend the contract of Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Meria Carstarphen for another year through June 30, 2019, citing the district's progress and her individual contributions at the helm.

She became superintendent in 2014. Last year, the board amended Carstar-



Raquel Reedy

phen's contract to extend her tenure to June 30, 2018.

In New Mexico, the Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education voted to extend Superintendent

Superintendents continued on page 9

President Obama Taps Urban School Leader To Education Post



Barbara Jenkins

Before leaving office, President Obama appointed Superintendent Barbara Jenkins of the Orange County Public Schools in Orlando to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National

Board for Education Sciences.

She was one of more than a dozen leaders in various fields to be appointed to key Administration posts, the White House announced Jan. 5.

"These fine public servants bring depth of experience and tremendous dedication to their important roles," President Obama said. "I know they will serve the American people well."

The overall mission of the National Board of Education Sciences is to advise and direct the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), a statistics, research and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education.

Superintendent Jenkins was also recently named Florida's 2017 Superintendent of the Year by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. And she is a member of the Council of the Great City Schools' Executive Committee.

Military Veterans *continued from page 1*

Spouses Career Expo at Coral Gables High School. Some 50 individuals attended the event, resulting in four hired as teachers and one in a non-instructional post.

"I would imagine over time there will be additional hires because of the event," says Ana Flores, director of recruitment in the Miami-Dade County school system, explaining that some candidates for positions might need to take necessary steps to meet requirements.

In Milwaukee, some 30 individuals attended the Troops to Education Veterans & Family Members Career Fair, which a school district official indicated was a good turnout since there's no active military base near the city. "While the number of candi-

CLOSE-UP

dates might not have been high, the quality of the candidates was great," says Adria Maddaleni, senior director of talent management in Milwaukee Public Schools. "We recruited a teacher, some paraprofessionals (teacher aides), and other support staff."

Other school districts hosting Troops to Education events included New York City, Dallas, San Diego, Jefferson County in



Louisville, Tulsa, Washoe County in Reno, Nev., and Killeen, Texas.

Troops to Education has reached out to more than 40 veteran network outlets, including the USO, military bases, federal Defense, Veterans Affairs and Labor departments, military branches and more, says Rice, who leads the initiative.

Serving Schools



Jose Puentes in the Navy

Talent specialist Juan Puentes in Los Angeles, a retired senior Army sergeant, joined the Los Angeles Unified School District in 2003 after 20 years in the armed forces.

He taught in the school system and is now involved in the Troops to Educators initiative. "People don't understand that military experience is a great transition to education," he told the *LAUSD Daily*.

His younger brother, Jose Puentes, a Navy veteran, is now working in a special-education classroom at Huntington Park High School in Los Angeles in a program to help him earn his special-ed teacher credentials.

"My brother was an LAUSD teacher and he always had that pride for what he did," says the younger Puentes. "Watching him, I realized that same sense of purpose could be achieved if I was in front of a classroom."

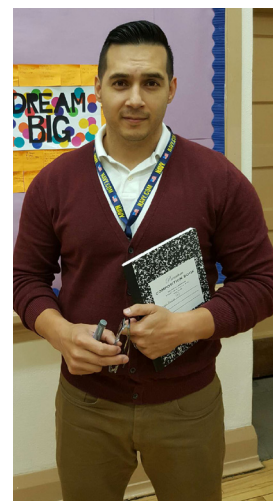
Helping to prepare military veterans for jobs in the Troops to Education program are some of the nation's colleges and universities. Providing support primarily comes from colleges of education and campus offices of veteran services.

Future Plans

Plans for Troops to Education include the initiative becoming a public-private partnership to replace the Department of Defense's Troops to Teachers program

through the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act.

Retired Army Lt. Gen. David Ohle, who works closely with Rice, expects the defense policy bill will receive bipartisan support in Washington, and hopes the Troops to Education public-private venture will be officially launched by October, he points



Jose Puentes today in a Los Angeles classroom, training for special-education teacher certification.

out in an *Urban Educator* interview.

The idea of converting the Defense-funded Troops to Teachers program to a public-private program, seeking matching funds from the private sector, was generated at a Department of Defense meet-

ing in 2013 among Troops to Teachers administrators, military, school-district and university leaders. Troops to Teachers was established in 1993.

The Troops to Education public-private program "represents a new approach to combining public and private resources to benefit all sectors of the public," Ohle emphasizes. "This approach reduces the long-term federal financial commitment to staffing America's schools while at the same time increasing the commitment to both the nation's schools and its veterans."

Urban-education officials who helped create Troops to Education almost a year ago will meet again in early February at the Council of the Great City Schools' annual Chief Human Resource Officers meeting in San Antonio, Texas. A second coordinated event will be planned around Memorial Day in May.

"We will continue to recruit aggressively and to offer assistance to veterans and spouses who have made the decision to become teachers as well as those who want to take support staff positions," says Rice.

Chicago Launches Partnership to Attract Quality School Principals

Chicago Public Schools is launching a new initiative that aims to place an exceptional principal at the helm of every school.

The Chicago Principal Partnership is an effort by the nation's third largest school district to improve principal quality. The initiative was created in response to a recommendation by the Principal Quality Working Group, formed in August by Chicago Schools CEO Forrest Claypool and Chief Education Officer Janice Jackson.

As part of The Partnership, a website has been created to host a comprehensive hiring portal where candidates can view job opportunities, while hiring schools can analyze available candidates.

Through the website, <https://chicagoprincipals.org>, a more transparent hiring pool will be developed to help schools more quickly and effectively identify quality candidates. The website will also be used to house resources for programming and professional development for principals.

As part of The Partnership, district officials also will work to improve data sharing with stakeholders that will enhance the flow of information allowing for more in-

formed decision making.

Members of The Partnership consist of principals, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic partners, universities, parents and community members.

In addition, an Advisory Committee has been charged with establishing priorities for The Partnership.

"Strong principals are absolutely critical to driving student success, and we're very excited that members of The Chicago Principal Partnership will work together to help attract, develop, support and keep strong leaders in the public schools that need them the most," said Chief Education Officer Jackson.

Beyond the two immediate goals, The Partnership will supplement other recent principal leadership programs the school system has created. This includes the Independent Schools Principal Program, which provides high-performing principals freedom to operate with diminished oversight from the district's central office, and the Chicago Principal Fellows program, which gives school leaders 12 months of executive leadership development through Northwestern University.

D.C. Schools Principal Program Launched

The District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington is launching its first-ever public schools-charter principal program.

The Executive Master's in Leadership program will offer 10 principals from the district's schools and 10 principals from the city's charter schools the opportunity to participate in a cohort at Georgetown University.

The 11-month program was created to enhance the skills and capacity of public school principals, while collaborating and sharing best practices between district and charter schools.

The program will offer 14 courses and

opportunities in which principals will partner with a peer from a different school sector to design solutions to overcome challenges.

The program is a partnership among the D.C. school system, Georgetown University, the D.C. Public Education Fund and the Walton Family Foundation.

High school principal and participant Jada Langston is interested in the cohort format and learning from other principals. "...This will be an opportunity to build connections and relationships with charter school colleagues," said Langston. "We can do something phenomenal in this city through this cohort."

Council Offers Math, Science Scholarships Named for Astronaut

Graduating high-school students this spring have an opportunity to compete for math and science scholarships offered by the Council of the Great City Schools in a program that has seen winners successfully pursue careers in fields such as engineering and medicine.

For the eighth consecutive year, ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships are available to students in the 69 big-city school districts represented by the Council.

Four \$5,000 scholarships for two males and two females each will be awarded to two African American and two Hispanic students graduating in the Class of 2017.

In 2010, former NASA astronaut Dr. Bernard Harris Jr., a physician and businessman, and ExxonMobil wanted to help under-represented students pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies, and to increase diversity in the STEM workplace.

This year's high-school seniors can apply for the competitive scholarships online at www.cgcs.org. Deadline to submit applications is April 10.



Dr. Bernard Harris Jr.

Omaha Posts Highest State Test Scores In District's History

Omaha Public Schools recently posted the highest state test scores in district history. The school system showed improvements from the previous year's test scores in all core subject areas: science, math, reading and writing.

Gains made by the district on the 2015-2016 state tests include a 6 percent increase in reading in grade 11 and a 6 percent increase in grade 4 writing.

Also showing improvement was the district's lowest-performing elementary and secondary schools. In an effort to boost academic achievement at these schools, several years ago the district hired four principal supervisors to serve in coaching and mentoring roles to help provide principals with additional support and resources. The efforts have paid off, with math scores improving by 5.58 percent, reading scores improving by 6.42 percent and writing scores improving by 10.72 percent.

"We are in the business of helping our students succeed academically so they are prepared for life beyond the classroom," said Omaha Schools Superintendent Mark Evans in a news statement.

Superintendent in Jacksonville Honored



Nikolai Vitti

Superintendent Nikolai Vitti of Florida's Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville recently received the 2016 Outstanding Superintendent Communicator Award from the Sunshine State School Public Relations Association.

Superintendent Honored continued on page 12

Urban Districts Make College Board's Advanced Placement Honor Roll

Texas' Austin Independent School District has worked hard to identify motivated and academically prepared students who are prepared to take Advanced Placement (AP) coursework. The district's efforts have paid off, when it was recently selected to the 7th Annual AP District Honor Roll by the College Board.

This marks the first time the district has been included on the list, which selects districts that have increased the number of students participating in AP, while also increasing or maintaining the percentage of students earning AP Exam scores of 3 or higher for three consecutive years.

Austin was not the only big-city school district that made the list. Atlanta Public Schools, North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Chicago Public Schools, Dallas Independent School Dis-

trict and Denver Public Schools were included on the 7th Annual AP Honor Roll. Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas and Denver were also recognized for making the list for multiple years.

Criteria for the AP District Honor Roll is based on examination of three years of AP data, from 2014 to 2016. Honorees must have increased participation and access to AP, increased or maintained the percentage of exams by minority groups who scored 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam, and improved performance levels overall.

In 2016, more than 4,000 colleges and universities around the world received AP scores for college credit, advanced placement, or both.

Anchorage School District Develops Public Data Dashboard

In an effort to become more transparent and help students succeed, Alaska's Anchorage School District has created a public dashboard that provides data on student attendance, behavior and achievement.

The dashboard was created by the district's information technology department as a tool to help guide the district and ensure all students receive a quality education. The dashboard contains three years of trend data in the following categories: academic status, attendance, on track for graduation for middle and high school students and behavior/discipline.

According to the *Alaska Daily News*, the dashboard enables users to break down information by school, grade and ethnicity. In addition, information can also be broken down by student groups, including students with disabilities, homeless students and students from economically disadvantaged families.

Anchorage Schools Superintendent Deena Paramo believes the dashboard will provide the district with the opportunity to create a plan to move the district forward to help every student succeed.

"To be successful, we need to make data-informed decisions about what we are doing with our schools and student groups," said Paramo. "The dashboard helps bring this information to our fingertips so we can consistently monitor trends and make adjustments to improve student outcomes."

Anchorage School Board President Tam Agosti-Gisler told the *Alaska Dispatch News* that the dashboard will not only illuminate problems and achievement gaps, but will also be used to inform school board decisions about where to put more money and resources.

The dashboard is available at: www.asdk12.org/data.

Milwaukee Program Aims to Get More Students On the Road to Success

Milwaukee Public Schools has launched a new program – MPS Drive – to help more students earn their driver's license to take advantage of employment opportunities.

In the Greater Milwaukee area, 72 percent of full-time jobs are located in suburban communities, which aren't always easily accessible by public transportation, according to the district.

"MPS Drive expands career options for our young people and addresses a significant disparity between the number of white and African-American teens in our community who have driver's licenses," said Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Darienne Driver.

In Milwaukee, only 30 percent of 18-year-olds have a driver's license compared to the statewide average of 66 percent. In the highest poverty areas of Milwaukee, only 14 percent of 18-year-olds are licensed.

MPS Drive does more than help students earn their driver's license. Students

enrolled in the program get after-school academic support and dinner. There is no minimum grade-point average, or GPA, to participate. The program also includes a "restorative track" for teens whose driver licenses are suspended before they are old enough to take driver education, usually for failing to pay a minor civil forfeiture.

"Our goal is to remove barriers that can keep a student from accessing the program," said Driver.

MPS Drive began as a pilot last spring at four schools and served 262 students. The program, which has been expanded to eight sites this school year, serves 1,400 students and is open to any age-eligible Milwaukee Public Schools student.

Over the next three years, there are plans to grow the program to eight more sites and to serve 6,000 students a year, ensuring every age-eligible MPS student is guaranteed a spot in the program and behind the wheel.

Des Moines District Pilots Bus Program To Up Attendance

In an effort to boost attendance, students at Hiatt Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa, will now be able to ride the public bus for free.

The free bus rides will be available to students as part of a new bus pilot program created by Des Moines Public Schools in conjunction with the United Way of Central Iowa (UWCI) and the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART).

The program began in December 2016 and will continue throughout the 2016-2017 school year.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, students from economically disadvantaged families are four times more likely to be chronically absent than others, often for reasons beyond their control, such as unreliable transportation.

"For many of our students, access to transportation can be a barrier in getting to school," said Hiatt Principal Deborah Chapman in a news statement. "We're optimistic that this free bus service will help more students get to school especially in these colder winter months."

Students only need to show their school ID and will be able to ride DART for free at any time.

UWCI has contributed \$10,000 to the pilot program to cover the cost of students' fares. Organization officials hope that improving access to school will increase students' graduation rates. "DART's new service will make it easier for students to get to school, bringing us a step closer to achieving that goal," said Mary Sellers, president of UWCI.

Currently, all Des Moines students are able to ride DART for free after 4 p.m. on weekends and during school breaks. Students who are not assigned to DART buses for school transportation or are not part of this pilot program may access a half-fare pass for transportation during the day.



Three Urban Districts Participate In Sprint Internet Pilot Program

Three big-city school districts are participating in a pilot program to help students who do not have Internet access at home.

Missouri's Kansas City Public Schools, Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools and the San Diego Unified School District are three of five school districts selected to participate in the Sprint Foundation's 1Million Project pilot program.

Beginning in January, the initiative will provide high school students in those districts free mobile devices and free high-speed wireless Internet through Sprint. In addition, students at five high schools across the nation will also participate in the program. The urban schools selected were Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Global Collegiate Academy in Dallas, West Charlotte High School in Charlotte, N.C., and Lake Worth Community High School in Florida's School District of Palm Beach County.

The school districts and high schools were selected for the pilot program from more than 100 applicants.

Participating students will receive either a free smartphone, tablet or hotspot device and 3 gigabytes of high-speed wire-

less data a month. Students who receive smartphones can use it as a hotspot and for unlimited domestic calls and texts.

Sprint officials hope the pilot program will give them a deeper understanding as to how student needs vary from market to market and school to school, how to allocate resources to schools and organizations and how to communicate with students in the program. Lessons learned from the pilot will be used in a nationwide rollout of the program beginning in the 2017-2018 school year and will run through the 2021-22 school year.

In the next five years, Sprint hopes to enroll one million high school students in the program, who will receive a wireless device and service for up to four years in high school.

The school districts and high schools in the pilot will also be invited to join the five-year program.

School districts and high schools that want to participate in the 1Million Project can apply at www.sprint.com/1millionproject. The deadline to apply is March 31, 2017.

Nominations Sought for Presidential Awards In Math and Science Teaching

Applications are now being accepted for the 2017 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The award is the nation's highest honor for mathematics and science teachers, and recognizes educators who demonstrate high-quality lessons that enhance student learning.

Mathematics and science teachers from grades 7-12 with at least five years of full-time mathematics or

science teaching experience are eligible for the award, administered by the National Science Foundation for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Elementary teachers receive the award in even-numbered years and secondary teachers receive the award in

odd-numbered years.



Presidential Awards continued on page 9

San Francisco District Introduces Teacher Credentialing Program

At the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, San Francisco Unified School District faced a teacher shortage, with approximately 100 teaching positions that needed to be filled.

In an effort to alleviate this shortage, California's fourth largest school district has recently created its first teacher credentialing program called SFUSD Pathway to Teaching. The program aims to recruit and train new teachers, while developing standards-based and culturally relevant curriculum for students in the district's highest need schools and subject areas.

Under the program, applicants who pass the selection process will receive intensive training and professional development during the spring and summer, while earning a full salary. After completing the training and beginning next school year, teachers will be able to lead their own classrooms with coaching from an expert teacher. At the end of the school year, those who demonstrate success in the classroom will be recommended for their preliminary teaching credential and offered a teaching position in the district. In addition, they will receive two years of coaching and support.

"We need the SFUSD Pathway as another option for aspiring teachers to get their credentials," said Brent Stephens, the district's chief academic officer, in a press release. "We've heard a lot of interest from individuals who are already working in our school communities as a paraprofessional, substitute teacher or an after-service provider."

In its first year, the teacher credentialing program is recruiting people to become elementary multiple-subject teachers, elementary Spanish bilingual teachers and K-12 special education teachers. According to district officials, the program will eventually expand to include teachers in more subject areas and grade levels.



Council of the Great City Schools

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE/POLICY CONFERENCE

March 11-14, 2017

The Mayflower Hotel • Washington, DC



Saturday, March 11

Registration
Continental Breakfast
Fall Conference Planning Meeting
Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group Meeting
Discussion on State Policy Issues
The "ABC's" of Federal Education Policy
Meeting of Legislative & Federal Programs Liaisons
Executive Committee Meeting
Task Force Meetings
New Member & New Attendees Orientation
Welcome Reception

Sunday, March 12

Registration
Buffet Breakfast
Board of Directors Meeting
Great City Colleges of Education Meeting
Luncheon with Speaker
Legislative Briefings with Council Staff
"Taste of Cleveland" Reception

Monday, March 13

Breakfast with Speaker
Policy Briefings with Congressional and Administration Staff
Luncheon with Speaker
Capitol Hill Visits (You must arrange your own appointments)
Reception at The Mayflower Hotel

Tuesday, March 14

Breakfast and Briefing
Adjourn

Superintendents continued from page 3

Raquel Reedy's contract by a year to June 2019.

Reedy took the helm as acting superintendent in August 2015 and was named superintendent in April 2016.



Kent Paredes Scribner

The Fort Worth Independent School District Board of Trustees extended the contract of Superintendent Kent Paredes Scribner with a five-year commitment to fulfill the district's mission of preparing all children for success in college, career and community leadership.

He became superintendent of the 87,000-student district in October 2015.

A Step Up

The Board of Education of California's Oakland Unified School District recently elevated Deputy Superintendent Devin Dillon to serve as interim chief.

She takes the reins from Superintendent Antwan Wilson, who has been named chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools. He takes the helm of the Washington, D.C., school system in February.

Presidential Awards continued from page 8

A teacher may be nominated for the award by others or may nominate themselves. The nomination deadline is April 1, 2017 and the application deadline is May 1, 2017. The nomination form is available at <https://www.paemst.org>.

Winners will receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation and a trip to Washington D.C., for recognition ceremonies and professional development opportunities. Since 1983, more than 4,700 teachers have been recognized, with up to 108 awardees each year.

2017 Council of the Great City Schools Conference Calendar

Chief Human Resources Officers Meeting	February 8-10, 2017	San Antonio, TX
Legislative/Policy Conference	March 11-14, 2017	Washington, DC
Chief Operating Officers Conference	April 4-7, 2017	New Orleans, LA
Bilingual Directors Meeting	May 16-20, 2017	Los Angeles, CA
Public Relations Executives Meeting	July 7-9, 2017	San Antonio, TX
Chief Information Officers Meeting	July 2017	TBD
Curriculum & Research Directors' Meeting	July 2017	TBD
Executive Committee Meeting	July 21-22, 2017	Portland, OR
Annual Fall Conference	October 18-22, 2017	Cleveland, OH
Chief Financial Officers Conference	November 14-17, 2017	Miami, FL

Saint Louis School District Receives Full Accreditation

In 2007, the Missouri State Board of Education voted to strip the Saint Louis Public Schools of its accreditation, and a three-member panel was appointed to oversee the school system. At the time, the district faced a \$24-million budget deficit, had a 56 percent graduation rate, and had been led by six superintendents since 2003.

Nine years later, the state board recently took another vote, unanimously granting full accreditation to the district. The vote was a result of improvements the district has made in student achievement, attendance, graduation rates, governance and finance. The school system was also praised for being "on track" or "exceeding" academic achievement scores in mathematics and English Language Arts during the past two school years.

Since 2008, the school system has experienced stability with Kelvin Adams as superintendent, who together with the three-member Special Administrative Board, has worked to turnaround the district. Under their leadership, St. Louis schools now has a 72 percent graduation rate, a 95 percent attendance rate and a \$19.2-million surplus.

The district has also gained the confidence of its citizens, who last year approved

Saint Louis continued on page 11



St. Louis Schools Superintendent Kelvin Adams receives congratulations from Missouri education official Marge Vandeven after the district received full accreditation.

Freedom Rider Meets Cleveland Students in Wake Of Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration

The day after the nation celebrated the life of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 16, students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District met a legendary activist who helped carry out King's work.

Perhaps not a household name to the students who came out to meet Joan Trumpauer Mulholland, 75, she gained national recognition as a white Southern woman who defied her segregationist upbringing and participated in more than three dozen sit-ins and demonstrations by the age of 19.

She was a Freedom Rider and participated in a historic sit-in at a Woolworth lunch counter in Jackson, Miss.

Donning a shirt emblazoned with "Black Lives Matter" and a raised fist emblem, Mulholland addressed hundreds of 10th and 11th graders at the district event, discussing her work and giving students advice on fighting racism and injustice in their own communities.

Mulholland also helped plan and organize the 1963 March on Washington. She received a Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum in 2015.

'An Ordinary Hero'

She joined the students to watch *An Ordinary Hero: The True Story of Joan Trumpauer Mulholland*, an award-winning documentary that chronicles her activism. The film told how Mulholland was disowned by her family, attacked, shot at, hunted down by the Ku Klux Klan for execution and put on death row in Mississippi's notorious Parchman Penitentiary with other Freedom Riders.

She also crossed paths with some of the biggest names in the Civil Rights Movement, including King, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, John Lewis and Harry Belafonte.

Mulholland told students after the film



Freedom Rider Joan Trumpauer Mulholland greets a student after discussing her experiences.

that while the work was not easy, she was motivated by a vision of an equitable society in the South.

"I could see that my culture was not what it should be, and I wanted to do what I could to be true to what I said I believed -- that we're all humans who should be treated equally," Mulholland said in a Cleveland school district News Bureau report. "I wanted to make my home, the South, the best that it could be for all people."

Students lined up to ask Mulholland questions, including how she found courage in the face of immense danger and backlash.

"You've got to practice what you say you believe in," Mulholland explained. "Fear is a waste of time and keeps you from doing what you need to do."

Some asked what they could do to fight racism and injustice in their own lives. She offered these guidelines.

"Get in a group with some friends that agree with you, find some adults who you respect and who respect you, and come up with a plan. You don't have to start real big -- just start where you are, and it will grow."

A Special Moment

After the event, Mulholland had a special moment with several women in the audience who were members of the Delta

Sigma Theta sorority. Mulholland was the first white woman to join that sorority when she attended Tougaloo College, a school she helped integrate by becoming the first white student.

Dozens of students swarmed Mulholland after the event to ask for hugs and photos. They said the activist's story left them inspired and empowered.

"It was touching to hear a different point of view from the Civil Rights Movement and to see that she got treated poorly just for sup-

porting black people," said Emmanuel Banks, a student at the John Marshall School of Civic & Business Leadership. "It made me wake up and realize everyone has to do their part."

Banks' classmate Onyango Pearl said he was honored to meet someone who had known and worked with his idol, Martin Luther King, Jr.

"It makes me want to stand up and be more courageous when I see things happening around me," Pearl said.

(Story reported by Ryllie Danylko of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District News Bureau.)

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the first operating tax levy increase to support the school district in 25 years.

"This work has never been about one person, one program, one school, one organization or one idea," said Saint Louis Schools Superintendent Adams. "It has been about everyone working together to improve the outcomes for students. We realize and understand that we still have a lot of work to do. We are not going to stop until every single child can read."

According to district officials, the Saint Louis school system is the first district in Missouri to ever regain full accreditation after being designated as unaccredited.



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Superintendent Honored *continued from page 6*

He was honored for providing exceptional school district communication planning and implementation, which includes outreach initiatives such as hosting community-based "Chat with the Supe" meetings, expanding the use of digital platforms and broadcast programming and collaborating with schools to develop internal marketing plans to strengthen brand equity. He also launched "The Parent Academy" to increase engagement.

In leading the 128,000-student district, Superintendent Vitti recognizes the importance of listening to and communicating with stakeholders. "I strive to transparently explain and engage stakeholders on all issues when there are questions and concerns, even when those conversations are tense and uncomfortable," he stresses.

"As a leader of one of the country's largest school systems, he has faced numerous challenges and he has maintained open lines of communication with parents, students and fellow educators," says Nina Waters, president of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, in a press release.

"We are proud of Dr. Vitti and his efforts to send a strong message to the community when he articulates his vision for the future of Duval County Public Schools students," she adds.

Houston Unveils Literacy Initiatives

The Houston Independent School District recently unveiled two new literacy initiatives – a literacy bus and "My Home Library" – aimed at closing the literacy gap for the district's economically disadvantaged students.

The mobile interactive "Literacy Bus" will distribute age-appropriate books to children in grades kindergarten through fifth at various city-owned baseball and softball parks.

The school system also launched a new Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation initiative called "My Home Library," enabling children to create a wish list of books they want to read. Community members can then sponsor six books for a specific child's home library.