



urban Educator

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Tsunami Relief Efforts Offer Students 'Lesson in Compassion'

Erin Glynn, the principal of Eugene Field Community School in Minneapolis, was recently approached by a teacher who wanted to do something to help victims of the tsunamis that struck South Asia and East Africa on Dec. 26.

They decided to start a donation drive at the school and its sister school, Nathan Hale, to raise funds for relief efforts.

"We thought that we would just collect change," says Glynn. "But about four days later, we ended up with \$10,000."

The elementary and middle schools have a combined student population of approximately 1,100, who opened their piggybanks as well as solicited donations from family and friends.

"We received so much community support," stresses Glynn. "The experience really offered our students a lesson in compassion."

School officials then contacted electronics retailer Best Buy, which had announced that it would match all contributions up to \$1 million to help victims of the tsunami.

With the matching contribution of



Students from two Minneapolis schools present a \$10,000 check for tsunami relief efforts.

\$10,000 from Best Buy, a total of \$20,000 was given to the American Red Cross International Response Fund.

Other urban schools across the nation also raised funds for tsunami relief efforts. The Denver School of the Arts donated profits from the opening night of a play to help tsunami victims.

Students at Tanaka Elementary in Las Vegas will adopt a school in Thailand that was damaged by the tsunami.

And the School District of Philadelphia is partnering with the Philadelphia NAACP to help tsunami victims. Money collected at schools will be delivered to the American Red Cross as part of the international relief effort.

Houston Names New Leader

Other Districts in Search

What do Houston, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Tampa, St. Louis and Indianapolis have in common? In 2005, their school districts have or are expected to have new superintendents.



Abelardo Saavedra

The nation's seventh largest school system, the Houston Independent

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LEGISLATIVE
CONFERENCE

Education Laws To Be Discussed

The nation's urban educators will have an opportunity to discuss the Bush Administration's second-term education agenda at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 12-15, in Washington.

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urban Educator

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

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Anchorage District Study Finds One-Third of Students Overweight

A significant number of students in Alaska's Anchorage school district are overweight, according to a recent state study of children's height and weight measurements.

Researchers from the Alaska Division of Public Health used data collected by school district nurses during health screenings of students from 1998 to 2003 and found that approximately one-third of Anchorage students between the ages of 5 and 17 are overweight.

According to district officials, the percentage of Anchorage children who are overweight is similar to national findings.

The study also discovered that about one-third of 5-year-olds in the district enter kindergarten already overweight. In addition, researchers also determined that 75 percent of young, overweight students will remain overweight and possibly gain additional weight during their childhood.

The district's nurses record students' height and weight in kindergarten and grades 3, 5, 7 or 8, and 10 or 11. Prior to the study, data collected by school nurses were used only for individual students' health files at school.

In an effort to help students achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, the Anchorage school system has developed *Healthy Futures*, an initiative that encourages physical activity for children through organized events. The district also monitors students' height and weight, provides health and physical instruction in schools and offers a mentoring program between school nurses and overweight children.

"We in the school district must continue to teach our students healthful eating habits and encourage them to be physically active," said Superintendent Carol Comeau.

Newark After-School Program Considered the Best

The Newark Public Schools has received an exemplary evaluation for its after-school program from the National Community Education Association.

"We haven't found any program in the country that surpassed Newark," says Duane Rupert, senior evaluation consultant, who co-chairs a key NCEA committee. "For the size and the scope of the program, it's in a league of its own."

In 2003, Elnardo Webster Jr., who heads the Newark school district's Office of Extended School Day Programs, won the prestigious national title of After School Alliance Ambassador.

The after-school program in Newark includes academic, cultural, recreational and personal development components.

Council Participates In London Forum On Urban Education

The Council of the Great City Schools participated in a United States-United Kingdom bilateral conference in mid-December on urban education.

Twenty-five American and 25 British academicians, scholars, researchers and education officials convened in London.

Council Executive Director Michael Casserly addressed the issue of "Who Will Teach in Urban Schools?" in a panel discussion.

He joined Boston Public Schools Superintendent Thomas Payzant, who was one of the conference's co-chairs, on the trip to London. Payzant recently won the Council's top award for urban school leaders, the Richard R. Green Award.

At the U.S.-UK bilateral conference, Payzant addressed the issue of "How Will Urban Schools Be Governed?" on a panel that included the permanent secretary of the British Department of Education.

In a written statement, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told conferees, "...we are always determined to learn from the experience of others."

Blair noted that there's a need to reduce the dropout rate and to strengthen curriculum and assessment for the 14-19 age group in England.

As a result of the Council's participation in the conference, Casserly notes that a British delegation of educators plans to attend the Council's Annual Fall Conference in October in Atlanta.

Boston Launches Free Tutoring Program At City Libraries

Students who visit Boston public libraries not only get to check out books for free, but also have the opportunity to receive free tutoring as a result of a new program.

Homework Helpers offers free tutoring at neighborhood libraries for all city students in grades K-8. The initiative is the brainchild of Richard Stutman, president of the Boston Teachers Union (BTU), which is also funding the tutoring initiative with approximately \$44,000 collected from membership dues.

Tutors are members of the BTU who have signed up to participate in the program. According to union officials, many of its members eagerly applied for the opportunity to become tutors.

"The opportunity for teachers to provide out-of-school extra help is a great way for students to receive any additional assistance they may need and to showcase the talents of our teachers and our wonderful public libraries," said Boston Schools Superintendent Thomas Payzant.

The tutoring program began in November and is operating at all 27 Boston Public Library locations.

\$5.6-Billion Needed to Pay Shortchanged NYC Schools

A court-appointed panel recently ruled that New York City schools have been shortchanged by \$5.6 billion a year, appearing to settle a long legal battle on whether the state owes the nation's largest school system more money and by how much.

But a nagging question remains: Where's the money coming from?

In a court brief, the Council of the Great City Schools had urged the panel of special referees to recommend a funding increase annually that is at least equivalent to the plaintiff's proposal, which was for \$5.6 billion over current state expenditures.

In the past five years, school-funding lawsuits in 20 states have

been decided or settled, often in the plaintiffs' favor, according to a recently released report by *Education Week* newspaper.

Thirty-one states are considering major changes in how they fund education, according to the report, *Quality Counts 2005: No Small Change, Targeting Money Toward Student Performance*. And 16 states are embroiled in litigation challenging their current school finance systems.

"America's system for financing education is at a crossroads," stresses Virginia Edwards, editor of the report and newspaper.

Legal arguments on school financing have shifted from whether states

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Houston Names....

School District, recently selected Abelardo Saavedra as its new leader. He succeeds Kaye Stripling, who retired from the district in August.

Saavedra, who was the school system's interim superintendent, is the first Hispanic to lead the district in its 81-year history.

Saavedra had been the district's executive deputy superintendent for school support services. And from 1993 to 2000, he served as the superintendent for the Corpus Christi Independent School District in Texas.

Departing Leaders

Cincinnati Public Schools is seeking a new superintendent to replace Alton Frailey, who led the 38,800-student district since 2002.

Frailey left the district to become superintendent of Texas' DeSoto Independent School District, an 8,000-student district near Dallas.

Rosa Blackwell, the school system's deputy superintendent, will be in charge of the day-to-day operations of the district.



John Thompson

Pittsburgh Public Schools will also be seeking a new school superintendent to succeed John Thompson, whose contract expires in June.

Thompson has led the district since 2000, after serving as superintendent of Oklahoma's Tulsa Public Schools.

After serving for more than 40 years in the School District of Hills-



Earl Lennard

borough County in Tampa, Fla., Earl Lennard recently announced his retirement, effective in June.

Lennard was selected to lead the nation's 13th largest school district in 1996 after serving as deputy superintendent. He began his career with the district in 1963 as a teacher.

"I have served in this district for over 40 years and yet it seems like just yesterday I was starting out in a classroom full of students," said Lennard in a news release. "It has been a wonderful experience and one that I wish could go on forever."

Serving the children of Indianapolis for 36 years, Duncan N.P. Pritchett Jr. has decided to retire as superintendent of the largest school district in Indiana, effective June 30.



Duncan N.P. Pritchett

He has been at the helm since 1997, working his way to the top from a variety of positions in the school system, including teacher, principal, elementary education director and chief of staff, as well as interim superintendent.

"This is a happy/sad time. Being part of the IPS (Indianapolis Public Schools) team for the past 36 years has been extraordinary," said Pritchett in a news release. "I look forward to these next few months as we continue to find ways to increase student achievement. That's the bottom line."

St. Louis Public Schools recently chose Pamela Randall Hughes to serve as the district's interim superintendent.

Hughes was formerly the district's deputy superintendent and replaces interim superintendent Floyd Crues, who left the district to take an extended medical leave. Crues had served as interim superintendent since July 1.

Other big-city school districts also seeking new superintendents are Buffalo, Dallas, Fresno, Norfolk, Tucson and Fort Worth.

Anchorage Supt. Receives Extension

Carol Comeau has been the superintendent of Alaska's Anchorage Independent School District since 2001, and during her leadership, student achievement has increased, dropout rates decreased, and the district adopted a six-year instructional plan. And in 2003, the Alaska Association of School Administrators recognized Comeau as Alaska's Superintendent of the Year.



Carol Comeau

Perhaps it's no surprise that the board of education for the Anchorage school system recently extended her contract for one year to December 31, 2007.

In a press release, the board said it was pleased with Comeau's leadership of the 49,400-student district. "As an educator first and foremost, Superintendent Comeau is clearly committed to improved academic achievement for all students."

The extension of Comeau's contract will make her one of the longest-serving big-city superintendents in the nation. According to a report by the Council of the Great City Schools, the average tenure for big-city school leaders is approximately three years.

Council Launches Second Ad Drive

The Council of the Great City Schools has launched its second national advertising campaign, called "Tested," to build support for the nation's big-city schools.

Much different from the "Thank You" campaign in 2003, the "Tested" public service announcement has an edge that "recognizes the efforts of urban schools and schoolchildren to boost performance while dispelling destructive stereotypes about urban schools and their students," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

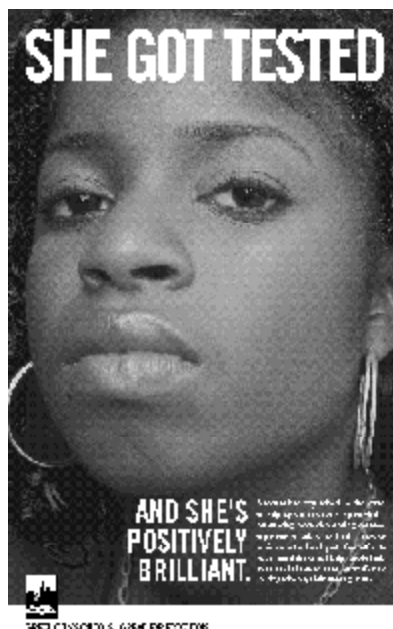
Television, radio and print "Tested" spots have been made available to all 64 of the Council's member school districts at no cost for districts to utilize as they deem appropriate in their respective markets.

A national distributor has also pitched the TV and radio PSAs to national broadcast and cable networks in addition to individual markets along with the "Thank You" spot. The distributor will be able to monitor ad placements and audience size.

"Tested" follows the Council's first-ever-advertising campaign that was launched in the summer of 2003 after more than two years in the making.

Both "Tested" and "Thank You," which thanks local communities for their support while highlighting the responsibility for everyone to help inner-city students succeed, are based on solid research.

Messages were tested in a national telephone survey, focus groups and journalists' interviews.



NYC Schools To Explore City's 'Cultural Treasures'

A new program in New York City allows educators and students an opportunity to explore the many cultural sites in the nation's largest city.

The New York City Department of Education recently launched what it calls the Cultural Pass Program, designed to encourage schools to take advantage of the "cultural treasures" of the city.

More than 400 principals and local instructional superintendents attended a recent kick-off at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to receive cultural passes, which provide the school leaders with free general admission to more than 25 cultural institutions across the city as well as special discounts to various perfor-

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Magnet Programs In Duval County, Houston Recognized

The Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., has a diverse magnet school program, with some of its 61 schools offering a combination of vocational and college preparatory courses.

The Houston Independent School District's magnet program offers parents and students an opportunity to choose from dozens of themes in 108 schools.

These two magnet programs are among the six best in the nation, according to a publication recently released by the U.S. Department of Education.

Creating Successful Magnet Schools Programs highlights six school districts with exemplary magnet programs that offer innovative programs and decrease minority isolation while increasing student achievement.

Several factors have led to the success of Duval's magnet program, such as well-chosen themes for each school, having strong leaders committed to the magnet program and establishing open lines of communication among administration, staff and parents.

"We're very happy to have national recognition of what we already know here in Duval County: that our magnet programs are among the very best in the country," said Duval County Public Schools Superintendent John Fryer.

The success of Houston's magnet school program can be attributed to each magnet school having a coordinator whose first priority is to implement the magnet theme. In addition, top levels of the district—school board members, superintendents and central office staff—are supportive of magnet schools.

St. Paul District Awarded \$2.8 Million To Launch Pre-K Program

Many urban districts are trying to close the racial achievement gap with efforts primarily concentrated on elementary, middle or high school students.

But Minnesota's St. Paul Public Schools has launched a program focusing on 4-year-olds — preschoolers.

The new program, *Project Early K*, is an effort by the school system to develop a seamless transition from preschool to kindergarten.

Funded by a \$2.8 million grant from The McKnight Foundation, nine new programs have been developed for preschoolers that use curriculum and instruction aligned with programs currently used in K-12 district classrooms.

A *Project Early K* Community Partnership Council has been created to help the district find sites for the new programs, identify students for participation and oversee the development of teacher-training programs.

In addition, community-based child care providers are also included in the project to reach as many young children as possible.

"Thanks to The McKnight Foundation, we are able to move forward with a plan that facilitates cooperation between early education providers and K-12 educators throughout the city," said St. Paul Schools Superintendent Patricia Harvey. "We believe that the end result will be students who are more successful."



Richard Hinds, left, is congratulated by award namesake Bill Wise as 2002 winner David Koch looks on.

Miami CFO Receives Award

Richard Hinds, the chief financial officer of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, was recently presented with the Bill Wise Award in Education at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief Financial Officers Conference in San Diego.

The award was sponsored by Deloitte Touche LLP and is given annually to an outstanding business official who has demonstrated distinguished service to urban education.

Urban Educators Win Star Teaching Awards

Kimberly Harris-Pappin and Rachel Windler teach at the same elementary school in Rochester, N.Y. The two educators also have something else in common: they are winners of the American Star Teaching Awards.

The awards were created last year by the U.S. Department of Education to recognize effective classroom teachers who are improving student academic performance, particularly through the use of innovative classroom strategies.

The program paid tribute to 58 outstanding teachers nationwide at all grade levels and disciplines. Recipients were highlighted as representatives of the thousands of teachers who, regardless of the challenges they face, are making a difference in the lives of their students.

Harris-Pappin and Windler teach at Adlai E. Stevenson School No. 29, where they serve as mentors and role models to other educators.

"They have the great gifts required for outstanding teaching: knowledge of subject, ability to communicate, displaying magic in the classroom and inspiring students," said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige in a news statement. "I applaud their excellence in teaching and commitment to education."

Other big-city school honorees were Sharon Turner, a teacher at George Elementary School in Jackson, Miss.; Brandon Phillips, a teacher at Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary in St. Paul, Minn.; and Tamara Rhone, who teaches at East High School in Denver.

Memphis District Ends Corporal Punishment

The Memphis school board recently abolished corporal punishment and launched the superintendent's "Blue Ribbon Behavior Initiative," composed of a package of alternative strategies to ensure student discipline.

"Over the years, we've learned that paddling is not a good solution to change student behavior," said board member Lora Jobe in a news release. "Our focus should be to develop positive behavior in the classrooms and not just being reactive when problems occur in our schools."

Memphis City Schools will not allow corporal punishment starting with the 2005-2006 school year.

The school system joins a growing list of big-city school districts nationwide that have banned corporal punishment. According to Memphis school officials, only three of the top 21 urban districts — Dallas, Jacksonville, Fla., and Tampa, Fla. — still use corporal punishment as a discipline measure.

"Based on national research and current district data, we know paddling does not serve as a deterrent to prevent bad behavior," says Memphis Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson. "We will be looking to adopt the best proactive strategies used by other large urban districts and our own 38 schools that have already done away with paddling to see what is working well in those schools."

The district will finalize a comprehensive plan over the next several months to implement for the 2005-2006 school year. Some of the proposed strategies include establishing a Blue Ribbon Behavior Task Force to

get the community involved, developing community-based activities to support good student behavior, creating alternative school options, placing behavior specialists in high priority schools, and increasing parental involvement.

Alternative discipline measures to replace corporal punishment will include restricting students from extra-curricular activity privileges, such as sports and band participation, as well as instituting Saturday schools and community service.

Philly School District Partners With Football Team

The landscape of Philadelphia will get a little greener as the result of a partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Eagles football team.

The two organizations are joining forces to plant 300 trees at 15 elementary schools and five park sites as part of *TreeVitalize*, a program launched by Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell to restore tree cover to the Philadelphia region.

The professional football team has donated \$125,000 to the district to support the tree planting, and program officials are currently working to select the schools and park sites where new trees will be planted.

Elementary schools located in communities with low tree cover and

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Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed, left, awards Indianapolis teacher Daphne Draa (center) the \$25,000 Milken prize as a Milken official looks on.

Urban Educators Win \$25,000 Teaching Award

Thirteen urban educators recently received very good news: a \$25,000 Milken National Educator Award for excellence in teaching.

Dubbed the "Oscars of Teaching" by *Teacher Magazine*, the awards were given to 100 K-12 teachers, principals and education specialists across the nation who have demonstrated exceptional educational talent and have developed innovative teaching practices that engage and inspire students.

Urban educators in Anchorage, Chicago, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Greensboro, Philadelphia, Houston, Portland, Ore., Washington, D.C., and Boston received the \$25,000 awards.

Two teachers from schools in the District of Columbia and two teachers from Las Vegas won the award.

Sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, the educator awards are the largest teacher recognition program in the nation, with more than \$50 million in cash prizes awarded since the program's inception in 1985.

Broward Schools Join Forces With Business Community

The Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has teamed up with local businesses to pair business executives with school principals to share business planning, benchmarking, strategic planning and other business management strategies.

The Executive Partnerships program was launched this month with more than two dozen business executives already paired up with an equal number of principals. Most of the schools involved in the program are among the lowest performing schools in the district.

The initiative grew out of a collaboration between the school district and the Broward Alliance, which is Broward County's economic development agency.

The model for the Executive Partnership initiative is actually a partnership developed three years ago between Patricia Dixon, the principal at Dillard Elementary School, and Philip McNally, the president of RBC Centura Bank.

Over the years the collaboration between Dixon and McNally has resulted in the revitalization of the school's PTA; the securing of books for a summer reading program; and living assistance for the families of some of the needy students who attend the school.

In one case, banker McNally was instrumental in bringing a couple of bald eagles to the school for the students to see. This event was important for the students, because the school's mascot is the bald eagle and many of the students would not have had the opportunity to see a real eagle.

The program will not only benefit the school district but also the local business community as well, because better performing schools result in an improvement in the quality of the potential workforce for these businesses.

District officials hope to identify a local business executive for the more than 250 schools and educational centers in the district.

Columbus Stays the Course

Members of Ohio's Columbus Board of Education have elected Stephanie Hightower as president of the school system's governing body for a fifth consecutive year.

This is unusual for the district, says a spokeswoman, although it's not unprecedented among big-city school systems.

Serving her sixth year on the Columbus school board, Hightower gave a presentation with the district's chief communications officer, E. Gayle Saunders, at the Council of the Great City Schools' recent Fall Conference on how the school system is succeeding in building community support.

80-Year-Old Sacramento Principal Still Going Strong

Virginia Grabbe walks the halls of Sacramento's Isador Cohen Elementary School everyday. But the 80-year-old is not a volunteer or a concerned grandparent, she is the principal of the school.

At a time when most people her age are basking in retirement, Cohen is helping 359 students receive a quality education.

Her career in education spans several decades — going back to when Harry Truman was president. But the veteran educator continues to teach because she loves working with people.

"I'm a people person, and I still have the energy, health, the desire and the expertise," said Grabbe in an interview with the school district's newspaper, *The Connection*. "I don't ever want to be sitting around a card table with three other 80-year-olds eating peanuts."

Grabbe has taught at Isador Cohen since 1976 and has served as principal for the past six years. In addition to being the principal, she also runs the

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Isador Cohen Principal Virginia Grabbe greets students before school. (Photo by Alicia Altamirano)

Jackson District Gets Fathers Involved In Education of Their Children

In Jackson, Miss., the school system has launched a major initiative to get dads involved in the education of their kids as "children are longing for the presence of their fathers in school," says the superintendent.

Jackson Public Schools has partnered with the National Center for Fathering (NCF) in a program aimed at combating violence and providing role models for students.

Called WatchD.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students), the national program began in 1998 as a response to the Jonesboro, Ark., school shootings.

Working with a grant from the AmSouth Foundation, Jackson Public Schools implemented the WatchD.O.G.S. program in seven of its schools with great success, according to district officials. Last school year, 489 dads participated in the program.

A total of 699 volunteer hours were contributed in the program around the district, and 94 men volunteered on a regular basis, according to the district. The fathers are asked to volunteer at their child's school for a day or half a day in any of a number of volunteer roles.

"It is time we get fathers in the lives of their children," stresses Jackson Schools Superintendent Earl Watkins. "Children are longing for the presence of their fathers in school and not just at outside activities."

According to a National Center for Fathering study, 52 percent of fathers surveyed never take their kids to school, and 37 percent have not visited the classroom.

And many children grow up in homes without a male role model, and male educators often take that role by default. However, only 21 percent of the nation's teachers are male, according to a survey by the National Education Association.

Interest in the WatchD.O.G.S. program in Jackson is very high among the city's fathers, school district officials indicate.

In January 2004, the Jackson school district had more than 800 dads attend its first Dads Conference, which was designed to reach out to fathers and provide contacts and resources for them to get involved.

Mississippi Supreme Court Justice James E. Graves Jr., the Jackson Public Schools Parent of the Year in 2001, was the keynote speaker. "I think the fact that so many fathers showed up is evidence that they are really committed to being good dads," Justice Graves said. "They want to know how to do better."

The conference was so well received that a second Dads Conference is planned for March 3. Says Fred Nolan, the Jackson Public Schools' WatchD.O.G.S. coordinator, "My goal is to make WatchD.O.G.S. one of JPS's most successful programs."

Nolan reports that the volunteer numbers of the current school year have almost matched the totals from the year before with still five months to go before the 2004-2005 school year ends. And 14 more schools in the district have met with Nolan to begin programs for next fall.



Jackson parent Thomas Thompson helps prepare his son for a field trip at Dawson Elementary School.

New Scholarship Targets Females

A new scholarship for African-American females interested in pursuing careers in science, math, engineering or technology fields is now available for graduating high school seniors in urban school districts that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools.



Marcia Page

Applications will be available beginning in February for the Texas Instruments Marcia Page Scholarship for Mathematics and Science Excellence, recently established by the Texas Instruments company and the Council.

Named for an executive of the company's Educational and Productivity and Solutions business, the Marcia Page Scholarship will be awarded to two African-American female students who have demonstrated academic achievement in science and math.

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The IDEA Improvement Act of 2004: An Improvement?

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

A House-Senate Conference Committee passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 on Nov. 17, and it was signed into law by President Bush two weeks later. The Council of the Great City Schools supported the reauthorization because the organization believed that it was an improvement over current law.



LEGISLATIVE
COLUMN

But the Council also noted in a letter to the conference chairman that the bill represented an improvement by degree rather than being the comprehensive reform that we would have preferred.

The bill, to be sure, contained a number of significant improvements. Schools now have the authority to intervene early with specialized IDEA services in order to remedy instructional or behavior problems before having to identify a child as needing special education—a provision that the Council led.

The new law also improved the process for resolving disagreements between schools and parents without elaborate due process procedures or litigation. And it has “leveled the playing field” for schools when such due process procedures are used. The federal requirements for addressing discipline issues have also been revised and streamlined. Some additional flexibility has been built into the Act to help meet the highly qualified teacher requirements under the *No Child Left Behind* Act and to loosen the restrictive requirements for related-services personnel.

Finally, the time-consuming requirements for developing short-term

objectives for each special education student has been removed for most students—a major improvement. Meaningful headway has been made in each of these areas.

Many of the reforms in IDEA’s procedures and requirements will necessitate an agreement between the school and the parent but could result in a more streamlined program. For example, the required triennial evaluation can be eliminated by agreement. The required number of “IEP Team” members can be reduced by agreement. And, many of the required IDEA meetings can now be held *via* conference call with agreement between the school and the parent. Beyond this “reform by agreement” language and the short-term objectives, however, the Conference Committee reduced few other IDEA requirements.

A careful reading of the new law, in fact, shows that not a single IDEA requirement has been totally eliminated from the program. The reauthorization actually adds new requirements on dealing with private schools and new mandates for evaluation and IEP development. The inability to eliminate unnecessary federal requirements and reduce paperwork is underscored by the Conference Committee’s decision to establish a “Paperwork Reduction Pilot Program” and a “Multi-year IEP Demonstration Program” in a limited number of states—the very culprits in a long and undistinguished history of piling additional requirements on top of already extensive federal man-

dates. The chance to capitalize on many other reform opportunities in both the House and Senate bills was largely missed.

In retrospect, the 1997 IDEA reauthorization produced significant improvements in the legal and financial provisions of the Act, but did little to improve day-to-day operations. The 2004 IDEA reauthorization made further improvements in the Act’s legal framework, including disciplinary procedures, but it is unclear that the new Act will be much easier to implement. How the U.S. Department of Education and the states ultimately regulate on IDEA will answer the question: Was this Act a sufficient improvement?

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Education Laws....

The conference, to be held at the Washington Marriott Hotel, will also focus on such topics as:

- The implementation of the new special education law;
- Prospects for amending the *No Child Left Behind* Act; and
- The upcoming reauthorizations in the new 109th Congress regarding higher education, vocational education, Head Start and the E-Rate programs.

Moreover, speakers from the Bush Administration and Capitol Hill will address urban school leaders at the conference.

Registration information can be found on the Council’s website at www.cgcs.org

Night Spot Opens in Newark to Help Teens Hone Their Skills

One of the nation's most popular television shows is *American Idol*, a talent show where young people perform in front of a live studio audience.

Now students in Newark can participate in their own version of *American Idol* by performing at *Mic It Up*, a nightclub designed just for teens to showcase their singing and musician skills.

District officials have transformed the cafetorium at Harold Wilson School into a nightclub rivaling New York's legendary jazz spots.

The club was conceived by Newark Schools Superintendent Marion Bolden as an opportunity to provide talented secondary students a place where they can hone their musical and performance skills as well as socialize with other teens throughout the district in a safe environment.

"It's important to provide safe havens for our teens where they can perform and support their peers," said Bolden.

In addition to offering students a place to display their talent, the club also provides internships in visual and performing arts, graphic arts, culinary arts, videography and business and finance. Students also get valuable experience working in the entertainment industry by serving as production managers, stagehands, hosts and hostesses.

The club receives support from district officials, a local foundation and the Police Athletic League. Its hours of operation are 7 - 10 p.m. on select weekends and 3 - 6 p.m. on Sundays.

"Newark has a rich history of talented musicians and *Mic It Up* will allow them to enhance their talents and hopefully one day join the legendary ranks of celebrities like Sarah Vaughn and Whitney Houston," Bolden pointed out.

Continued from page 9

New Scholarship....

Page plans to mentor the scholarship winners. Deadline to apply will be May 1.

For an application, check the Council's web site at www.cgcs.org or call (202) 393-2427 in February.

Council of the Great City Schools Calendar of Events for Year 2005

Executive Committee Meeting	Jan. 14-15	San Francisco, CA
Personnel Directors Meeting	Feb. 2-5	San Diego, CA
Legislative/Policy Conference	March 12-15	Washington, DC
Chief Operating Officers Conference	April 6-9	San Diego, CA
Technology Directors Meeting	June	Boston, MA
Curriculum Directors Meeting & Research/Assessment Symposium	July	Boston, MA
Public Relations Executives Meeting	July 8-10	Boston, MA
Executive Committee Meeting	July	Portland, OR
Annual Fall Conference	Oct. 19-23	Atlanta, GA
Chief Financial Officers Conference	Nov.	Fort Lauderdale, FL

*Continued from page 3***\$5.6-Billion Needed....**

provide "equitable" funding among their school districts to "adequate" funding to educate children to meet state education standards.

*Continued from page 5***NYC Schools....**

mances and concerts.

"The Cultural Pass Program was created to better acquaint principals with the many cultural and arts institutions available to their teachers and students across the city," says Schools Chancellor Joel Klein in a news release. "Through this program, we hope that more and more schools will use these organizations as instructional resources in teaching the arts and other subjects to our children."

The program is made possible by a grant from Bank of America.

*Continued from page 8***80-Year-Old....**

cafeteria. Every day during lunch time she sits at cafeteria tables and gives each child an opportunity to eat with her.

Last spring, the district offered an early retirement package and Grabbe, out of curiosity, attended an informational meeting. But when she walked into the meeting, she realized none of the people were in her age group; they were all in their sixties.

So after attending the meeting, she threw the information into the trash and drove to school the next morning.

Grabbe has taught hundreds of children throughout her long career. And what advice would she give to a new principal just starting out? "You are the leader, the model, and remember that you can't accomplish everything to everyone's satisfaction," said Grabbe in the *Connection*. "Stand tall, stand on your own convictions, reflect and soul search all the time. And always know that you are doing your very best."

*Continued from page 7***Philly School District....**

those that have adequate spacing for at least 10 trees will be given high priority. Schools will also be chosen if they can link planting to an environmental education program.

In a news statement, Paul Vallas, chief executive officer of the Philadelphia school system, thanked the Philadelphia Eagles for their generous contribution to the district's *TreeVitalize* initiative.

"This program will provide trees to public schools so that teachers and students will use them to enhance the environment around their schools," said Vallas.

The planting projects at the schools will be managed by the Fairmount Park Commission, which oversees the planting and care of 250,000 street trees in Philadelphia.

Two Eagles football players recently presented a check to Wright Elementary. The school is the first to participate in the tree planting program.

**Council of the Great City Schools**

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