



- New Omaha Chief, p.3
- Black Male eBook, p.7
- LEGISLATIVE**
- Crisis-to-Crisis Budget, p.10



## Urban School Leaders Converge For Council Inaugural Event

Urban school leaders from across the nation converged in Washington to witness the second inauguration of America's first African American president on Jan. 21 at the offices of the Council of the Great City Schools, located just three blocks from the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue.

They had an up-close view of the inaugural parade led by President Obama's motorcade after he delivered the inaugural address at the Capitol on a day that also marked the commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"My fellow Americans, the oath I have sworn before you today, like the one recited by others who serve in this Capitol, was an oath to God and country, not party or faction," President Obama declared.

**Inaugural Event** continued on page 4

## Ed Secretary to Address City School Leaders

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan will address urban school leaders on what to expect in President Obama's second term on the education front at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 9-12.

The conference will focus on topics such as the reauthorization of the Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the federal budget and sequestration in addition to second-term priorities of the Obama Administration.

A breakout session on education issues at the state level is also planned specifically for members of the Council.

Conference highlights are on page 9, and registration information can be accessed at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).



Arne Duncan

## Common Core Standards Advancing In Urban School Districts, Report Shows

Some 87 percent of big-city school districts nationwide plan to have fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in reading and mathematics, which have been adopted in 46 states and the District of Columbia, by the 2014-15 school year, according to a new report.

Forty-one percent of big-city school districts are also using the English language arts publishers' criteria developed by the non-profit Student Achievement Partners, a group instrumental in writing the standards, in order to make purchasing decisions about textbooks and materials, and 53 percent of responding districts have delayed purchasing decisions.

The report – *Implementing the Common Core State Standards in Urban Public Schools* – was released in late January by the Council of the Great City Schools, which has launched a multi-year analysis of imple-

mentation trends in the 67 urban school districts the national coalition represents.

The survey was intended to measure a range of instructional and management factors to determine the status of Common Core State Standards implementation and progress in urban public school systems through the 2011-12 school year.

"Effectively implementing the new standards is among the highest priorities in urban schools today," Council Executive Director Michael Casserly stresses. "The new benchmarks hold immense promise for elevating the quality of public education in urban school districts that serve large numbers of disadvantaged students."

Thus far, more than half (58 percent) of urban school districts responding to the survey have drafted plans for implementing the standards, and another 39 percent are developing such plans. In fact, most

**Common Core** continued on page 6

# Council Offers Scholarships to Big-City Students

For the fourth consecutive year, the Council of the Great City Schools is offering ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships to students in the 67 big-city school districts it represents who are pursuing career fields in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The scholarships are available to 2013 graduating high school seniors and are named for former astronaut, physician and businessman Bernard Harris, the first African American to walk in space.

Four \$5,000 scholarships for two males and two females each will be awarded to two African American and two Hispanic students in the highly competitive national scholarship program.

A Council judging panel reviews the applications, recommends finalists, and Dr. Harris selects the winners.

“With the help of the ExxonMobil Foundation, I am proud to support the development of innovative young minds and honor these students as they create a brighter future for themselves and our country,” he says.



Former NASA astronaut Bernard Harris shows students how to reach the stars.

Last summer, the Council awarded scholarships to students graduating from Alabama’s Birmingham City Schools, North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, Florida’s Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale.

“These scholarships provide an enormous opportunity for talented urban stu-

dents who have the academic promise and drive to succeed in STEM postsecondary studies and careers,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “And Dr. Bernard Harris is an outstanding role model for helping our students reach for the stars.”

The scholarship application is on [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org). Deadline is April 2.



**Council officers**

**Chair**

Candy Olson  
Board Member, Hillsborough County (Tampa)

**Chair-elect**

Eugene White  
Superintendent, Indianapolis

**Secretary-Treasurer**

Eileen Cooper Reed  
Board Member, Cincinnati

Executive Director  
Michael Casserly

Editor  
Henry Duvall  
hduvall@cgcs.org

Associate Editor  
Tonya Harris  
tharris@cgcs.org

Staff Writer  
Danyell Taylor  
dtaylor@cgcs.org

A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 67 of the nation’s largest urban public school districts.

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

All news items should be submitted to:  
Urban Educator  
Council of the Great City Schools  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 702 • Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 393-2427 • (202) 393-2400 (fax)

## Omaha District Names New Superintendent



Mark Evans

Nebraska's Omaha Public Schools recently selected veteran educator Mark Evans to lead the 46,000-student school district, effective July 1.

Evans has been the superintendent of Kansas' Andover Public Schools for eight years. He also held various positions in Wichita Public Schools, including interim superintendent.

He will replace interim superintendent Virginia Moon, and will become the first permanent superintendent hired from outside the school district in 30 years, according to the *Omaha World Herald*.

### Stepping Down in Indy

In mid-January, Indianapolis Public Schools Superintendent Eugene White announced he would retire, effective April 5, after leading the state's largest school district since July 2005.

He is also chair-elect of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors.

For his achievements at the Indianapolis Public Schools, Superintendent White received Indiana Superintendent of the Year recognition in 2009, and honored as the 2007 National Association of Black School Educators Superintendent of the Year.

### Departing in Memphis

After serving four years as the superintendent of Memphis City Schools, Kriner Cash recently resigned from the district he has led since July 2008.

Cash is credited with improving academic achievement and boosting graduation rates.

Cash was also responsible for overseeing a \$90-million grant by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to improve teacher effectiveness.

### Houston Stays the Course

Terry Grier was named the superintendent of the Houston Independent School



Terry Grier

District in 2009 and under his leadership high school seniors have increased their scores significantly on the SAT college entrance exam in reading and mathematics.

The district also has the lowest dropout rate in its history and a \$1.89-billion bond measure was approved for the district to rebuild or renovate 38 campuses.

The growing public confidence in the nation's seventh largest school system is one of the reasons Grier was recently given a two-year contract extension, lengthening his tenure through June 2016.

### Albuquerque Extension

Albuquerque Public Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks in late January



Winston Brooks

received a nod from the school board to extend his contract by one year, extending his tenure that began in July 2008 through June 2016.

When he took the reins nearly five years ago, the district set academic targets that included a 70 percent graduation rate and a narrowing of the racial/ethnic achievement gap. The state's largest school district hit those targets.

Four-year graduation rates recently released showed that 70.1 percent of Albuquerque Public Schools students graduated in 2012, and seven out of eight demographic groups saw improved graduation rates.

Superintendent Brooks is the past chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors.

## Former Philadelphia And Seattle Schools Superintendents Die

Former Superintendent Arlene Ackerman of the School District of Philadelphia died at age 66 on Feb. 2 after reportedly fighting pancreatic cancer.



Arlene Ackerman

She had led the nation's eighth-largest school district

from 2008 to 2011, taking the reins after a stint as a professor at Columbia University Teachers College. Prior to that, the veteran urban school leader had served as superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District (2000-2006) and the District of Columbia Public Schools (1998-2000). She had also been an administrator in the Seattle Public Schools before heading to Washington, D.C.

"Arlene Ackerman was a tireless champion for urban public education and a relentless warrior on behalf of urban children," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. Dr. Ackerman had served as chair of the Council's Board of Directors from 2005 to 2006, and was presented the organization's Richard R. Green Award for Excellence in Urban Education in 2010 for her lifetime of dedication to urban education.

"Whether in Philadelphia, San Francisco or Washington, Arlene Ackerman cared deeply about America's urban schools and students," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in a statement. "As a young superintendent in Chicago, I looked up to Arlene and learned a lot from her tenacity, courage and commitment to children."

Philadelphia, Seattle continued on page 12



Inaugural Event continued from page 1



Left to right, Houston school board member Paula Harris with daughter, Madison, and husband, Dwayne, pose with "the president" in Council reception area.

"... You and I, as citizens, have the power to set the country's course. You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time – not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals," he said to applause.

Under the banner "Race to the Top with Obama," more than 140 guests attended the Council's inaugural reception that drew superintendents to the nation's capital from school districts in Philadelphia and Richmond, Va., to as far as Fresno and Santa

Ana, Calif. School board members participated from Cincinnati, Houston and Tampa, joining other education officials and families.

For the president and country to succeed, California's Fresno Unified School District Superintendent Michael Hanson believes that pre-kindergarten through higher education "needs to be viewed as the pipeline for economic development." He indicated that national education strategy should be moving in that direction, lamenting that education is often a "political football."

### Heartfelt Advice

In giving advice to President Obama as he begins his second term, Council Board of Directors Chair Candy Olson said, "Don't give up! We worked for you because of hope." She came to the nation's capital from Tampa, Fla., where she is on the Hillsborough County school board.

"Follow your heart! Do what is right for the American people. Keep public education in the forefront," advised Florida's Orange County Public Schools Superintendent Barbara Jenkins, who traveled to Washington from Orlando.

Council Secretary-Treasurer Eileen Cooper Reed, a school board member in Cincinnati, echoed some of the advice. She would tell the nation's 44th president, "Stay true to your beliefs; people re-elected you because of them."

Dean Deborah Shanley of Brooklyn College-CUNY said she would tell Obama, "We the people got your back. We're moving forward with you and there's no turning back."

Paula Harris, a school board member in Houston, would tell the president, "Don't let up off the gas in education. Continue to focus and reform. Push the pedal to the metal a little harder. The outcome would be worth the investment in education."

California's Santa Ana Unified School District Superintendent Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana believes the president is wiser today after his first four years. As the former assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education in the Obama Administration, her advice is simple: "Follow your heart and gut, and we're here to support you."



Fresno Schools Superintendent Michael Hanson with daughter Allie at the entrance of Council offices.



Santa Ana Schools Superintendent Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana offers support to President Obama.

# Big-City Students Travel to D.C. to Celebrate Obama Inauguration

In 2011, the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy in Dallas opened its doors. The school is the first all-male public school in Texas and its motto is “The School of Today for Tomorrow’s Leaders.”

So, it is only fitting that 100 honor roll students from the school recently witnessed their school’s namesake take the oath of office for the second time at the Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C.

For 10<sup>th</sup>-grade student Kendell Long, the opportunity to travel to the nation’s capital and watch President Obama get inaugurated was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. “Being there was truly amazing and very inspiring. I know that I’m able to accomplish anything if I set my mind to it and I know that can overcome any barriers,” said Long.

Upon their return from D.C., the students plan to produce a multi-media presentation of their trip through the perspective of the school’s core beliefs: academia, brotherhood, character, perseverance and service.

They were not the only big-city students

to travel to Washington, D.C., to witness President Obama’s inauguration to a second term.

Students from Roosevelt Middle School in Florida’s West Palm Beach traveled to Washington for a three-day field trip where they visited museums, monuments, including the newest monument honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and attended President Obama’s inaugural address on the National Mall.

“As educators, we know that educating a child extends beyond the walls of the classroom,” said Roosevelt Principal Jo Anne Rogers. “Attending the inauguration was an example of that. It is a lifelong memory the students will have.”

And the 40 students from the school capped off their visit by attending the Presidential Student Inaugural Ball, in which only 300 students in the nation were invited.

Students at Philadelphia’s A.S. Jenks Academics Plus School held their own inaugural ball to celebrate President Obama’s second term. The ball was the culmination

of the school’s thematic study of the presidential election, where they learned how to vote using a ballot, held mock elections and learned about the character traits of each candidate.

HeavenLeigh Howard is a freshman student at Denver’s Collegiate Prep Academy, where she serves as the student council president and is a member of the basketball, soccer and softball teams. She took part in the inaugural festivities by traveling to Washington to attend the High School Presidential Inaugural Conference.

During the five-day conference, students from across the nation attended sessions on the presidency and presidential campaigns and heard from prominent speakers, including Condoleezza Rice, U.S. secretary of state and national security adviser to former President Bush.

Howard was only one of two Colorado students to be invited to the conference. “Meeting and working with students my age from around the country was a great experience,” she said. “I met a lot of kids with unique views on how to make our country better.”



Students from Florida’s West Palm Beach’s Roosevelt Middle School pose in front of the Lincoln Memorial.



Charles Smith is decked out for the inauguration ball at Philadelphia’s A.S. Jenks Academics Plus School.



Students from the Barack Obama Leadership Academy in Dallas attend the Presidential Inauguration ceremony at the National Mall.



Denver student HeavenLeigh Howard attends a ball at the High School Presidential Inaugural Conference in Washington, D.C.



Common Core *continued from page 1*

urban school districts (56 percent) began implementing the English language arts (ELA) standards in some schools, subjects, and grades in either 2010-11 or 2011-12, and 54 percent began implementation of math standards in those years.

In general, implementation of both ELA and mathematics standards is proceeding faster in elementary grades than in secondary grades.

The survey also covers a wide range of implementation activities in the urban school districts, including professional development, data-collection and measurement strategies, and communication methods to inform key community and education stakeholders of district Common Core initiatives and progress.

Other key findings in *Implementing the Common Core State Standards in Urban Public Schools* include:

- 100 percent of the responding districts indicated that they had involved their teachers to some degree in developing implementation plans. Fewer districts reported involving business leaders, city officials, or faith-based organizations.
- Some 87 percent of responding districts have analyzed the extent of alignment between their current ELA curriculum and the new standards or are in the process of doing so; 81 percent have done or are doing so in math as part of the implementation process.
- Some two-thirds of the districts surveyed were revising their reading and math curricula this school year.
- About 68 percent of the districts responding to the survey indicated that they are in the process of developing a system for monitoring implementation of the Common Core standards, while another 13 percent have already developed a measurement system.
- Some 55 percent of responding districts were developing new benchmark

or interim assessments based on the standards, while 29 percent indicated that they had already developed such tests.

Approximately 77 percent of the district respondents are currently in the process of developing communications strategies to make key education stakeholders, including parents, aware of the Common Core standards and how they will impact students, and another 10 percent have already done so.

Finally, the report makes preliminary predictions of how students in urban districts may perform on the assessments being developed around the Common Core academic standards based on student achievement levels on both the ACT college-admissions test and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The findings suggest that results will be similar to performance on NAEP, and that

roughly a fourth of students in large cities will be able to meet college readiness benchmarks in the first year.

“While there is no direct method of predicting exactly how students will fare on the new Common Core assessments, tests of similar rigor can be used as proxies to predict how students might perform given current student achievement levels,” says Council Research Director Sharon Lewis.

Since 2011, the Council of the Great City Schools has coordinated a major initiative to assist urban school districts in effectively implementing the Common Core State Standards with the support from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

*Implementing the Common Core State Standards in Urban Public Schools* can be accessed on the Council’s web site at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org)



## 96-Year-Old Volunteer

Thurman Haynes, the oldest volunteer in North Carolina’s Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, recently celebrated his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday at a surprise party where he shares a fist-bump with a student. He has worked with students for the past three years at an education center that serves students with disabilities. “These kids can teach you a lot if you just pay attention to them,” he stressed.

## Solutions Provided for Black Male Achievement

The Council of the Great City Schools has compiled solution briefs from some of the nation's leading scholars and experts in addressing the academic needs of African American males in a new report titled *A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement*.

The 360-page report, published as an e-book with the support of global education leader Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, follows a groundbreaking study in October 2010 by the urban-schools coalition on the academic status of African American males.

The study -- *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools* -- revealed that too many young black males in America were not realizing their full potential.

After releasing its 2010 report that gained nationwide headlines, the Council called for and hosted the National Summit on Educational Excellence and Opportunity for African American Males with the U.S. Department of Education in August 2012.

The summit featured a town hall discussion moderated by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, roundtable talks and presentations on possible solutions, especially based on solution briefs commissioned by the Council.

The e-book is a collection of solution briefs that outline and focus on both educational and non-educational strategies, such as expectations and self-esteem, early-childhood programs, college and career readiness, gifted and talented education, mathematics and English language arts instruction, partnerships and mentoring, and others.

"These strategies need to be as comprehensive as the challenges these students face, for it is typically the joint force of multiple reforms and how they are locked together and integrated that appears to make all the difference in improving student achievement," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

The new e-book is available at no cost and can be downloaded from Apple's iTunes (iBooks), Barnes and Noble (Nook Books) and Amazon.com (Kindle Books). *A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement* can be accessed on the Council's web site: [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

## Nominees Sought for Presidential Award in Math and Science

Nominations are now open for the 2013 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The award is the nation's highest honor for mathematics and science teachers.

In order to be eligible for the award, teachers must have at least five years of full-time mathematics or science teaching experience. This year, the award is open to mathematics and science teachers, as well as computer teachers, working in grades 7-12.

Teachers may be nominated for the award or may nominate themselves. The nomination form is available on the PAEMST web site at: <https://www.paemst.org>. The nomination deadline is April 1, 2013 and the application deadline is May 1, 2013.

The National Science Foundation administers the PAEMST on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Since 1983, more than 4,200 teachers have been recognized for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession. Up to 108 awardees may be recognized each year.

## Milwaukee District Launches Initiative: 'Saving Our Sons'

In an effort to help young men of color succeed not only in school, but become productive citizens, Milwaukee Public Schools is joining forces with local volunteer organizations in a new campaign called "Saving Our Sons—I will not die young."

The campaign is part of a larger initiative by the school district to get young males of color engaged in their school communities by providing them with volunteer adult mentors who will work with the students by helping them transform their lives academically, socially and culturally.

"The Saving Our Sons effort specifically is targeted at young men of color because of the alarming levels of violence in the community and the academic struggles involving ... these young men," said Milwaukee Schools Superintendent Gregory Thornton.

Saving Our Sons chapters will be created at 10 high schools and mentors will receive training from the organization 100 Black Men of Milwaukee.

In an interview with WUWM-FM radio station, Eric Gallien, the district's school support specialist, said that mentoring can range from speaking to a group of young men to visiting a school to have lunch with them. He eventually hopes to arrange job-shadowing opportunities for boys in the program, where they can observe mentors in their respective professions.

Organizations such as the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team have expressed interest in serving as mentors.

District officials said that future efforts will focus on creating a mentoring initiative for young women.

## Thousands of Educators Taking Advantage Of New Literacy Resource Bank

Nearly 11,000 educators around the nation are utilizing the free literacy resource bank launched by the Council of the Great City Schools and Student Achievement Partners just five months ago to help school districts implement the Common Core State Standards, adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

The resource bank, part of an initiative called the Basal Alignment Project (BAP), offers an online library of basal reading lessons used in grades 3 to 5 that are aligned to the new common-core standards in English-language arts and literacy.

The resources are made available on Edmodo, the leading social learning platform used by educators. Edmodo Chief Operating Officer Crystal Hutter has confirmed that the Basal Alignment Project Group is the largest professional learning community currently using the site.

"It's amazing how fast these resources have been adopted since we introduced the literacy resource bank in August," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "The ability for educators across the country to collaborate on tools and share materials is one of the most exciting outcomes of Common Core State Standards adoption."

The Basal Alignment Project offers a compilation of text-dependent questions and tasks to align the classroom lessons with the new common-core standards in English-language arts and literacy. The free resources help school districts transition to the new academic standards.

BAP is spearheaded by the Council, which represents the nation's largest urban public school systems, and coordinated by Student Achievement Partners (SAP), a non-profit group whose founders were instrumental in writing the new standards in English language arts.

Educators have requested similar open educational resources for other grades. The

Council and SAP are jointly planning the Anthology Alignment Project, which will focus on creating aligned common-core materials for the major market English anthologies in grades 6 to 10. School districts are currently being recruited to collaborate on the project and for more information can access <http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>.

## Orlando Teacher Wins People Magazine Award

Jennifer Bohn, a teacher at Evans High School in Orlando, Fla., was one of five teachers across the nation selected to receive *People* magazine's first teacher-of-the-year award.

She teaches leadership development to at-risk students and is the coordinator of the International Baccalaureate program at the high school.

As a recipient of the award, Bohn will receive \$4,000 for Evans High School and \$1,000 for personal use.

## CFO Wins Council Award

Sheila Shirley, the chief financial officer of North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, recently received the Bill Wise Award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Chief Financial Officers Annual Meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

The award, sponsored by Chartwells School Dining Services, recognizes and honors outstanding school business officials who have distinguished themselves through service to urban education.



Sheila Shirley

## Council Cites Educational Impact Of Sequestration

The Council of the Great City Schools recently released a research brief called the *Impact of Sequestration on the Nation's Urban Public Schools*, providing a snapshot of the major effects of the potential across-the-board federal budget cuts, or sequestration, on education programs and services for tens of thousands of urban schoolchildren.

In December, the Council called on national leaders to design a *fully* balanced budget solution that includes both revenue and entitlement program reforms to prevent the "fiscal cliff" of pending federal budget cuts and tax increases in 2013.

To avoid what it calls an "academic proficiency cliff" as the nation works to implement the more rigorous Common Core State Standards, the Council cautions that the investment in educational programs for disadvantaged students, English learners and students with disabilities, as well as teacher professional-development programs, must be strengthened— not cut.

"The economic implications of the educational cliff are as serious as those presented by the fiscal cliff itself, and the nation's leaders should keep these twin issues in mind with the same sense of urgency," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Without a balanced resolution to the fiscal crisis, federal discretionary programs in education and other areas --which constitute only 16 percent of the federal budget -- will be squeezed out, and important investments in the nation's future, such as better schooling, will be permanently undermined, Casserly stresses.

The research brief – *Impact of Sequestration on the Nation's Urban Public Schools* -- is based on a survey of more than 30 big-city school districts and can be accessed on the Council's web site at <http://www.cgcs.org>.





## Council of the Great City Schools

### ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE/POLICY CONFERENCE

**March 9-12, 2013**

Mayflower Renaissance Hotel • Washington, DC



**Saturday, March 9**

- Conference Registration
- Fall Conference Planning Meeting
- Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group Meeting
- Great City Colleges of Education Steering Committee Meeting
- Lunch & Meeting of Legislative & Federal Program Liaisons
- Executive Committee Meeting
- Urban Task Force Meetings
- New Members & New Attendees Orientation
- Welcome Reception

**Sunday, March 10**

- Conference Registration
- Breakfast Buffet
- Board of Directors Meeting
- Great City Colleges of Education Meeting
- Luncheon with Speaker: **U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan**
- Legislative Briefings

**Monday, March 11**

- Breakfast with Speaker
- Legislative Briefings
- Luncheon with Speaker
- Capitol Hill Visits
- Reception on Capitol Hill

**Tuesday, March 12**

- Breakfast with Speaker
- Legislative Briefings
- Adjourn

## Urban School Food Alliance Launched

In an effort to provide big-city students with healthier food options, six of the largest urban school districts in the nation--New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami-Dade, Dallas and Florida's Orange County Public Schools--have banded together to form the Urban School Food Alliance.

The focus of the group, composed of food directors from each of the six school systems, is to improve school meal options by sharing best practices and wielding their purchasing power to drive food costs down.

The alliance, whose districts collectively purchase more than \$530 million in food and food supplies annually, plan to negotiate with vendors to reformulate menu items that exceed the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidelines.

The group met for the first time last summer and has met regularly by teleconference. Food directors share and review menu items to ensure that they offer students meals that contain whole grain products, fresh produce and are low in fat, sugar and sodium.

In addition, the alliance will strive to improve eco-friendly practices in school cafeterias such as using biodegradable trays and flatware.

To show solidarity in providing healthy meals, the Urban School Food Alliance will be serving the same lunch at all six school districts on March 20. The menu includes roasted chicken, brown rice with seasoned black or red beans, steamed green broccoli, fresh seasonal fruit and milk.

"Forming such a partnership is unprecedented," said Michael Eugene, chief operating officer at Florida's Orange County Public Schools. "It's an honor to be a part of an alliance that wants to move the needle when it comes to improving school food, while implementing eco-friendly practices."

## Federal Budget Lurching From Crisis to Crisis

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

In the initial days of 2013, Congress passed the “fiscal cliff” legislation (H.R. 8), which extended tax provisions that had expired on January 1. In addition to the high-profile extensions of the Bush-era tax rates for 99 percent of tax-filers and the revisions in estate taxes, the measure extended unemployment insurance payments as well as current Medicare physicians’ payments.

The “sequestration” portion of the fiscal cliff legislation, however, was all but ignored except for a few budget tweaks and a delay in the across-the-board cuts to federal discretionary programs and a few non-exempt entitlements until March 1. And now, Congress has passed a short-term suspension of the federal debt ceiling until May 19 in hopes of reaching a multi-year budget agreement by then.

But on March 27 another possible government shutdown is looming as the short-term government-wide appropriations bill – the Continuing Resolution – will expire. With the federal government lurching from crisis to crisis, states, businesses, schools, and the economy in general remain uncertain about the stability of federal policy under our politically divided government.

Among the dozens of tax provisions included in H.R. 8 were the alternative minimum tax, capital gains tax revisions, and a number of education-related tax provisions, including a two-year extension of the \$400 million Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs), minor bonding provisions, and a variety of education tax deductions and credits. The 2 percent payroll tax holiday, however, was allowed to expire. Ironically, this tax cut actually added trillions of dollars to the federal deficit while Congress was pretending to do the opposite.

To be sure, the fiscal cliff bill delayed sequestration--the automatic across-the-board cuts in most federal programs and activities--for two months, and paid for it with \$24 billion, half through new revenues and half from equal cuts



in defense and non-defense discretionary spending. This \$24 billion is expected to reduce the March 1 automatic sequestration of federal domestic programs from an 8 percent cut to a 5 percent cut.

Having prevented tax increases for most Americans and a credit default by the federal government, Congress and the Administration temporarily averted the two major crises with the most intense political downsides. Of course, two additional deadlines remain: the automatic sequestration on March 1 and a government shutdown when the current Continuing Resolution expires on March 27.

Unfortunately, the March 27 deadline to avoid the government shutdown has risen to paramount political importance, leaving the March 1 automatic across-the-board cuts of 5 percent in domestic activities and 7 percent in defense cuts to “twist in the wind.” Though these cuts would not affect most federal elementary and secondary education funding levels until school year 2013-14 (technically July 1), this new round of funding cuts would create significant financial, programmatic, and personnel disruptions across our schools. Some members of Congress, however, support the cuts or are ambivalent about avoiding them on March 1.

Congress’s new habit of creating a “budget crisis of the month” seems to have desensitized Washington to the effects of its actions, and prompted seemingly ludicrous approaches to circumventing the political gridlock. The most bizarre example is the idea of using an obscure numismatic provision of federal law to allow the minting of a one-trillion dollar platinum coin, which would be added to the federal reserves to avert a government debt default.

Nonetheless, as the federal government moves from one crisis to the next, the ongoing uncertainties, delays, freezes, and cuts are eroding school-level capacity to plan, maintain and deliver services, particularly in high-poverty communities. It is past time for this to stop.



## U.S. Race to the Top Competition Yields 1st District Winners

Just before the December holidays, the U.S. Department of Education named the first winners of its Race to the Top-District Competition, with four urban school districts included in the 16 applicants selected to receive funding awards from \$10 million to \$40 million.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools won a \$30-million grant, riding a wave of success. The nation's fourth largest school district had recently won the 2012 Broad Prize for Urban Education and the Council of the Great City Schools' Award for Excellence in Financial Management.

The Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C. also won a \$30-million grant. But in early January, North Carolina's third largest school district received an additional \$5.2 million in Race to the Top funding. The additional funds will support the school system's personalized learning initiative in middle schools.

"Our vision is to personalize and digitalize learning for all GCS students, staff, parents and community volunteers," said Guilford County Schools Superintendent Maurice "Mo" Green in a press release. "These additional grant awards represent a significant step forward in this process."

South Carolina's Charleston County School District also won a \$19.4-million grant in the Race to the Top competition, and Seattle Public Schools is included in the \$40-million grant received by the Puget Sound Educational Service District.

"Districts have been hungry to drive reform at the local level, and now these winners can empower their school leaders to pursue innovative ideas where they have the greatest impact: in the classroom," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

The 16 winners were chosen from the 372 applications the U.S. Department of Education received, which were evaluated and scored by independent peer reviewers.



### Racing For Achievement

Five-star school principals in Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas participate in a friendly go kart race to celebrate their respective school's achievement. The school district recently released its school rankings – with 91 of the district's 357 schools achieving a five-star ranking. "While it may be tempting to take a victory lap, we must remain focused on making sure all of our schools become four and five-star institutions," says Superintendent Dwight Jones.

### Ed Secretary Honors Three Urban Principals

Liana Szeto began her career as a kindergarten teacher at Alice Fong Yu School, the nation's first public school Chinese Immersion Program, in the San Francisco Unified School District. She rose to become the program's lead teacher and in 1995 she became principal.

In honor of her exceptional work, Szeto has received the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. Selected as one of seven exceptional principals to receive this award, Szeto was honored along with two other urban school principals -- Blaine Helwig from the Austin Independent School District in Texas and Tracy McDaniel from Oklahoma City Public Schools.

Presented by the U.S. Department of Education, the award is given to outstanding principals of Blue Ribbon Schools who are academically superior and have



San Francisco principal Liana Szeto holds her Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding Leadership.

demonstrated dramatic student achievement gains among disadvantaged students.

Created in 1999, the award is named for a former secretary of education.



Council of the Great City Schools  
 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
 Suite 702  
 Washington DC 20004

PRESORT  
 FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 MERRIFIELD, VA  
 PERMIT NO. 2333

Philadelphia, Seattle *continued from page 3*



**Maria Goodloe-Johnson**

Nearly two months earlier, former Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson died Dec. 5 at age 55 after reportedly battling cancer. Dr. Goodloe-Johnson served as superintendent from 2007 to 2010. Prior

to leading the Seattle school system, she had headed South Carolina's Charleston County School District.

## Editor's Note

*Urban Educator* is launching a new human-interest feature in the March issue called "**Council Spotlight**," profiling an urban-schools superintendent, board member or unsung hero in the 67 big-city school districts the Council represents. The profile will be published periodically throughout the year, and we hope our readers will find each profile informative, entertaining or inspiring.

## Council of the Great City Schools 2013 Calendar of Events

Chief Human Resources Officers Meeting	Feb. 6-8, 2013	Orlando, FL
Legislative/Policy Conference	March 9-12, 2013	Washington, DC
Chief Operating Officers Conference	April 16-19, 2013	Orlando, FL
Bilingual Directors Meeting	May 15-18, 2013	Chicago, IL
Chief Information Officers Meeting	June 4-7, 2013	Indianapolis, IN
Public Relations Executives Meeting	July 5-7, 2013	San Diego, CA
Curriculum & Research Directors' Meeting	July 17-20, 2013	Miami, FL
Annual Fall Conference	Oct. 30- Nov. 3, 2013	Albuquerque, NM
Chief Financial Officers Conference	November 2013	Chicago, IL