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Council Supports Legislation For National Academic Standards

The nation's first group of education officials to endorse the development of national standards in mathematics, science and reading recently supported legislation for establishing nationwide academic standards.



Senator Chris Dodd at press conference

On the fifth anniversary of the *No Child Left Behind* Act on Jan. 8, the Council of the Great City Schools, which called for national standards in November, participated in a press conference with Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., who introduced legislation aimed at creating rigorous, voluntary core standards for elementary and secondary schoolchildren in math and science.

Called The Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids (SPEAK) Act, the bipartisan legislation is co-sponsored by Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.).

Dodd noted in his Washington announcement that the *No Child Left Behind* law passed five years ago in Congress was a first step toward improving education of America's schoolchildren. "It settled on an approach of 50 states, 50 standards, 50

National Standards continued on page 4

NCLB Implementation Improves in Cities, Study Shows

When President Bush signed the landmark *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act into reality on Jan. 8, 2002, the new law faced a buzz saw of controversy over its implementation and funding – though the concept of leaving no child behind appeared to be generally embraced.

Five years later, the reauthorization of the bipartisan legislation is now pending before Congress. A recent study shows the status of NCLB in the nation's largest public school systems – those in big cities.

No Child Left Behind: 5 Years and Counting

America's major city school districts have improved implementation of the *No Child Left Behind* Act since its enactment, resulting in higher numbers of students participating in choice and supplemental service programs. But the impact of the law's sanctions on raising student achievement in urban schools remains unclear, according to a comprehensive new survey released recently.

The analysis, *No Child Left Behind in America's Great City Schools: Five Years and Counting*, is based on a preliminary review of data on big-city school compliance with key provisions of the law from 2002-03

NCLB continued on page 6

Education Secretary to Speak

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings will deliver a breakfast address on March 19 to the nation's urban school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.

The direction of the new 110th Congress will be at center stage of discussion during the conference, scheduled March 17-20 at the Washington Mar-



Education Secretary
Margaret Spellings

riott Hotel in the nation's capital.

Major talks will also focus on reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind* Act and education funding and federal spending priorities.

Preliminary conference highlights are on page 9. Registration information is on the Council web site at www.cgcs.org.

Soldier Earning Bronze Star Medal Returns To Boston School from Iraq

Students and staff at Boston's William McKinley South End Academy recently welcomed back a real-life hero: guidance adviser Carlos Silva, who was honored for bravery during his tour of duty in Iraq.

A major in the U.S. Army Reserve, Silva served a year in Iraq, where he received the Bronze Star Medal, the fourth highest award presented by the United States Armed Forces for bravery, heroism or meritorious service.

Before his departure for Iraq, Silva worked as a guidance adviser for 10 years at McKinley. The day he resumed his position at the school, a large banner was draped across the building displaying school pride for his year at war.

"We are very proud to welcome Carlos Silva back to the U.S. and back to the Boston Public Schools after a distinguished

tour of duty overseas," said Boston Schools Superintendent Michael G. Contompasis. "He truly is a hero, not only for his service to the troops in Iraq, but also for his tremendous service every day to the students of McKinley South End Academy."

"He truly is a hero, not only for his service to the troops in Iraq, but also for his tremendous service everyday to the students..."

—Michael Contompasis, Boston Schools Superintendent

In Iraq, Silva led the Boston-based 883rd Medical Company Combat Stress Control Unit, providing thousands of soldiers with mental health services from August 2005 through October 2006. He and his team served in hostile territory and assisted in two mass casualty incidents, transporting soldiers injured in the line of duty.

According to Bonnie Miller, headmaster of McKinley, Silva's prior experiences as a guidance adviser helped him in his work in Iraq. "His experiences in helping students sort out family issues, control their behavior, and deal with loss, violence, and

trauma, as well as his experience here in crisis intervention, were very useful...for the similar situations being faced by the soldiers he supported and counseled."



Carlos Silva



Executive Director
Michael Casserly

Editor
Henry Duvall
hduvall@cgcs.org

Associate Editor
Tonya Harris
tharris@cgcs.org

Council officers

Chair

George Thompson III
Board Member, Nashville

Chair-elect

Carol Comeau
Superintendent, Anchorage

Secretary-Treasurer

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

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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
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National Board Certified Teachers Increasing in Urban Schools

Florida's Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale produced the largest number of board-certified teachers in the nation in 2006, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The NBPTS recently announced the top 20 school districts that had the most teachers earn National Board Certification, considered the highest credential in the teaching profession.

Nine of the top 10 school districts are members of the Council of the Great City Schools, with 11 Council districts ranked among the nation's leading 20 school systems in 2006.

Behind Broward and North Carolina's Wake County Schools, Chicago ranked third; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, fourth; Miami-Dade County, fifth; Hillsborough County (Tampa), sixth; Palm Beach County, seventh; Los Angeles, eighth; Orange County (Orlando), ninth; and Guilford County (Greensboro, N.C.), 10th.

Moreover, Florida's Duval County school system in Jacksonville ranked 12th while the school system in Austin, Tex., was 19th among the top 20.

No. 1 Broward County Public Schools had 240 educators achieving board certification in 2006, 54 more than the second-place Wake County in North Carolina, which had 186.

"It is indicative of the district's commitment to teaching and learning that we have seen this record increase in National Board Certified Teachers," said Broward County School Board Chair Beverly Gallagher in a news release. The school system now has 1,036 board-certified teachers.

Nearly 7,800 teachers nationwide achieved National Board Certification in 2006, a 7 percent increase over the number of teachers who earned certification in 2005, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Among the states, North Carolina and Florida led all others with the highest number of teachers who recently attained

the certification, contributing to a total of more than 55,000 board-certified teachers nationwide.

NBPTS also reported an increase in the number of teachers of color attaining certification in racial/ethnic groups, while the number of Caucasian teachers remained steady between 2005 and 2006. African American National Board Certified Teachers increased 24 percent; Hispanic teachers, 13 percent; and Native American teachers, 50 percent.

"National Board Certification strengthens and reaffirms quality teaching strategies ... represents the profession's highest standards, and has a positive impact on student learning," stressed former Georgia governor Roy E. Barnes, chair of the NBPTS Board of Directors, in a news release.

New Orleans Names New Superintendent

The New Orleans school system didn't look very far to find a superintendent: the district chose a New Orleans native who was serving in the role on an interim basis.

Darryl Kilbert, a 27-year veteran of the school system, will lead the district, which currently operates only five schools, according to the New Orleans *Times Picayune*. The district also oversees several charter schools.

Before Hurricane Katrina, the school system operated 128 schools. However, after the devastating storm, the state Legislature took control of 107 schools.

"...The bottom line is we're going to come back and be on strong footing, so we can absorb this district back and move forward," said Kilbert in the *Times Picayune*.

Pittsburgh Schools Superintendent and Mayor Launch College Access Partnership

In an effort to eliminate three barriers to college access--academic preparation, accessibility and affordability--Pittsburgh Public Schools is teaming with the City of Pittsburgh in an effort to make college a reality for all students.

The Pittsburgh Promise is a college access program designed to provide higher education to students as well as enhance the economic development of the city.

Under the program, graduates of the Pittsburgh school system will receive funds for tuition at a college or university within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Students receiving tuition assistance must make progress toward the completion of a degree or certification-seeking program.

And as part of the district's *Excellence for All* plan to raise academic performance, *The Pittsburgh Promise* will begin working with district students at a young age to make college accessible for everyone.

"Our goal with *The Pittsburgh Promise* is to help our children and their families plan, prepare and pay for education after high school," said Pittsburgh Superintendent Mark Roosevelt.

City officials believe strengthening the school district will attract more businesses and advance the economic vitality of Pittsburgh.

Plans are currently under way for the mayor and superintendent to form a joint task force to create a comprehensive plan for *The Pittsburgh Promise*, which will be funded through an endowment and an annual fund-raising campaign.

Baltimore Attracts Teachers with Technology

Many urban school districts use a range of recruitment strategies to attract teachers, such as offering housing assistance or monetary bonuses. But Baltimore City Public Schools is recruiting new teachers by offering them free technology.

New teachers are provided with a laptop computer as part of a new incentive program the school system has developed. Teachers also receive electronic curriculum

software, limitless access to online resources as well as a \$200 gift card to use online to buy school supplies.

The program has been successful, with the school district hiring more than 800 new teachers last year, a record for the system.

"It's the most teachers we've ever hired," said Charlene Boston, Baltimore Schools interim chief executive officer. In addition,

92 percent of the newly hired teachers fall under the "highly qualified" category of the *No Child Left Behind* Act.

District officials believe the new incentive program not only helps the school system recruit teachers, but also gives teachers increased access to information, helping them become more efficient in their classrooms.

National Standards *continued from page 1*

tests," he said, indicating that there's now a need for unified standards to accurately measure student proficiency in the United States.

"Across the board, countries with national standards are outpacing us," he maintained, pointing out that this could impede U.S. progress in a global economy. "...when we fail to compete as *one* nation, our entire country will get left behind."

Dodd, a senior member of the U.S. Senate's education committee and a presidential contender, emphasized that the standards would be voluntary and financial incentives would be offered for states to adopt them.

He praised groups that support the Dodd-Ehlers bill, including the National Association of Manufacturers, Alliance for Excellence, the Fordham Foundation, New America Foundation and the Council of the Great City Schools, which had thrown support behind former president Bill Clinton's voluntary national test plan in 1997.

Council Executive Director Michael Casserly noted at the press conference that America's guarantee of a free public education "comes with a warning label that should read: 'academic standards vary dramatically by state and may be detrimental to your child's future.'

"That's because each state is free to set its own standards for what its children should know and be able to do. Sometimes these standards are high, often they are not," he explained. "Either way, they drive the teaching and learning in Ameri-

ca's classrooms and serve to perpetuate the nation's educational inequities."

The Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids (SPEAK) Act would:

- Require the National Assessment Governing Board to create rigorous and voluntary core education standards in math and science in grades K-12;
- Ensure such standards are internationally competitive;
- Require the standards to be patterned after the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in math and science;
- Ensure that special education students and English language learners are considered in the standards development;
- Establish the American Standards Incentive Fund to encourage states to adopt the standards;
- Provide additional grants to states that meet incentive fund requirements to align their content criteria in math and science with NAEP achievement levels and adjust teacher certification requirements to match the new standards; and
- Allow the U.S. secretary of education to extend the *No Child Left Behind's* 2014 deadline for states to meet proficiency levels under the law if they adopt the standards.

Student Enrollment Stabilizing in Buffalo After Years of Decline

After seven years of declining student enrollment, the Buffalo Public Schools is beginning to stabilize in Superintendent James A. Williams' efforts to "stop the bleeding."

A recent *Buffalo News* article reported more than 36,000 students enrolled in the Buffalo school district this year, a decline of just 170 students from the last school year.

Over the past seven years, the Buffalo school system saw enrollment drop by more than 10,000 students, a decrease of 22 percent.

The district this year also gained 40 students who had transferred from charter or parochial schools to its new Math, Science and Technology Preparatory School.

"I think people are buying into our concepts, what we are trying to do," Superintendent Williams told the *Buffalo News*. "People are looking for structure, focus, academic rigor and more choice in where their children can attend school."

Williams cited new academic initiatives, the district's ability to control its finances, and the opening of the new math and science school as well as an alternative school that has led to near-stabilized enrollment.

Judge Overturns Law, Rejecting L.A. Mayor's Effort to Control Schools

A judge recently struck down a new California law that would have given Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa partial authority of the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second largest school system.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Dzintra Janavs threw out the new law, passed in the state legislature last summer, just 10 days before enactment, noting that it violated provisions of the state constitution. The mayor has appealed the ruling.

Reacting to the judge's decision, Los Angeles Schools Superintendent David Brewer remarked in a press statement, "As I've said all along ...I am committed to working with the Board of Education, the Mayor of Los Angeles and leaders of all the other cities within the Los Angeles Unified School District's boundaries to make this a world-class school district for our students."

If the law had gone into effect on Jan. 1, it would have given the Los Angeles mayor shared authority of the sprawling school district with a regional council of mayors and the school board.

Portland District Gets Million-Dollar Boost To Innovate Schools

Nike, the big athletic footwear, apparel and accessories company, recently announced the creation of the Nike School Innovation Fund, a five-year, \$9-million commitment aimed at spurring innovation in Portland Public Schools and two other Oregon school districts.

The Portland district will receive the first three Innovation Grants, totaling

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Alternative Offered To D.C. Mayor's School Takeover Plan

The new mayor of the District of Columbia, Adrian Fenty, recently proposed a plan to control public schools that would strip the D.C. Board of Education of its budget authority, and the mayor would appoint a cabinet-level chancellor to run the school system, as well as establish a school construction and modernization entity.

Under the plan, the school board would oversee teacher certification, academic standards and standardized testing, usually the functions of a state board of education.

The mayor already has a State Education Office that reports to him, which, if beefed up, could give Mayor Fenty "more direct authority over the school system than most other mayors in the county have, including those who appoint all the members of their school boards," wrote Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, in *The Washington Post*.

As an alternative, Casserly noted that the city could increase the mayor's authority by moving some of the school system's current responsibilities to an augmented D.C. State Education Office.

Responsibilities could include authority over the state portion of federal grants and administration of special education programs, test scoring, charter oversight, and *No Child Left Behind* accountability.

The new chairman of the D.C. City Council has scheduled public hearings to get a host of opinions on the mayor's plan before the legislative proposal is put to a vote. Congress would also have to decide on the plan.



Newark Unveils New High School

Newark Schools Superintendent Marion Bolden, third from right, cuts the ribbon on the district's first new high school in almost 40 years. Science Park High School, a 250,000 square foot magnet science and technology school, prepares students for careers in science and technology. Bolden and other Newark school officials were joined at the opening by New Jersey Gov. John Corzine. District officials believe the school will serve as a model for urban school districts in New Jersey and throughout the nation.

NCLB *continued from page 1*

to 2005-06. Thus far, 40 districts, enrolling 5.8 million students nationwide, have responded to a survey conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools, which supported NCLB when many other education groups did not.

"The law is living up to many of the promises that its strongest proponents hoped for and most of the pitfalls that its harshest critics warned against," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Collectively, the number of schools in the districts surveyed that needed improvement or were in "corrective action" or "restructuring" status under NCLB rose from 1,378 in the 2002-03 school year to 2,529 in the 2005-06 school year, despite substantial gains in student achievement on both state tests and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The total comprises 29.7 percent of all schools in the cities surveyed, or about 29.9 of all U.S. schools "in need of improvement."

Conversely, the survey finds that across responding districts, 161 schools exited the sanctions process by making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years after first being identified for improvement, while 444 schools made enough progress to have sanctions placed on "hold."

In addition, results from the survey showed that most urban schools were in sanction status for not making NCLB targets in reading, although large numbers of schools had also not made math benchmarks. Most schools, moreover, were in sanction status for not making targets for multiple racial, income, language and disability subgroups.

School Choice, Supplemental Services

In an investigation of two of the law's much-discussed provisions for students in struggling schools, the survey finds that more urban students are taking advantage of the option to transfer out of a poor-performing school while a larger number is making use of supplemental education services and tutoring.

Within the districts surveyed, about 2 percent of eligible students transferred schools under the NCLB choice provision. Though the overall number is small, it represents an increase of nearly 100 percent, with 23,000 students transferring in 2005-06 compared with 12,539 in 2002-03.

Notably, another 473,233 students were transferring to other schools using non-NCLB options such as charter and magnet schools, and open enrollment programs. In all, over 30 percent of students in urban communities were exercising some choice option, according to the analysis.

"The upward trend suggests that districts have gotten better at identifying available space and informing parents about their options," Casserly points out.

Meanwhile, 37 of the 40 responding districts must offer supplemental services. About 17 percent of eligible students participated. The number of students enrolled in supplemental services increased from approximately 124,000 in 2003-04 to about 230,000 in 2005-06. And approximately 91 percent of all participating students now receive their services from private providers.

Corrective Action, Restructuring

District approaches to boosting achievement in schools that have been placed in "corrective action" or "restructuring" phases after missing AYP targets for four and five straight years have largely focused on providing technical assistance, curriculum reform, professional development and planning support.

Fewer districts have pursued the law's more punitive sanctions, including reopening the schools as charters, replacing all or most of the school staff, contracting with a private entity to run the schools, or turning the schools over to the state—probably due to the lack of clear evidence that such strategies boost achievement, according to Casserly.

"Congress faces critical questions about the law's accountability system and whether it is effectively calibrated to improve instruction," Casserly stresses. "Although

NCLB has proven complicated to implement and cumbersome to administer, it has also helped America's urban schools direct attention to students who, for too long, were out of sight and out of mind."

Gov. Schwarzenegger Enacts Bill Initiated By Long Beach District

Students in California's Long Beach Unified School District who are not performing at grade level will now be able to receive additional academic services such as tutoring, as a result of a bill recently signed into law by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Under the law, which went into effect Jan. 1, the Long Beach school system, as well as other school districts in California, can require students who are not performing well academically to attend Saturday school, summer school, and receive before-and after-school tutoring.

The legislation was initiated by Long Beach administrators in an effort to make sure all students have the opportunity to meet federal and state academic standards and requirements, including passing the California High School Exit Exam.

Long Beach Schools Superintendent Christopher J. Steinhauer said he was delighted Gov. Schwarzenegger had signed the bill. "Now we can make certain that all students have every opportunity to meet academic standards," said Steinhauer in a press release. "We believe that all students can learn, and this law will help us to put that belief into action."

According to Long Beach administrators, about 90 percent of the district's 10,000 underperforming students currently receive supplemental services. Under the new law, the district can now require all of its at-risk students to participate in the academic interventions it will offer this year.

Newark Reports Climb in Graduation Rate Over 10 Years

Newark Public Schools in New Jersey recently reported a steady climb in its graduation rate over a 10-year period.

In 2006, the graduation rate for the district was 75.9 percent, compared to 45.7 percent in 1996. The district has achieved an all-time high graduation rate as a result of a number of programs and initiatives administrators have implemented to ensure that students who enter the district as freshmen remain in school and graduate with their senior class.

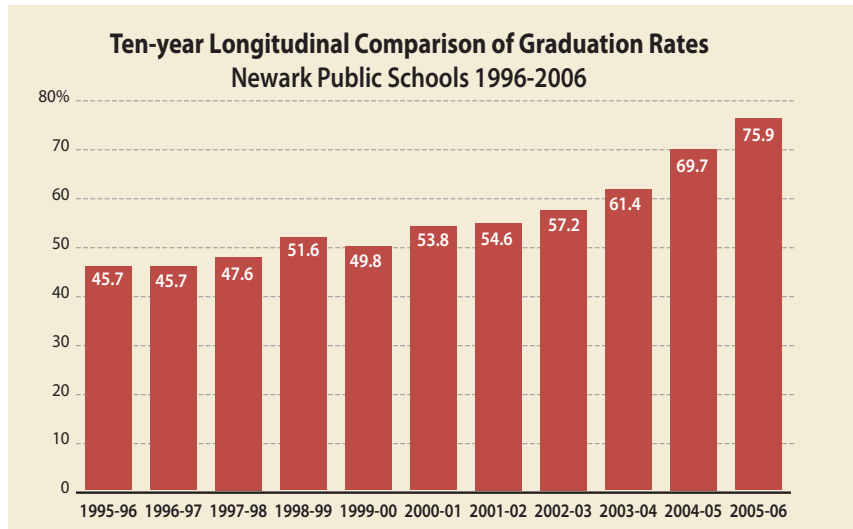
One of the initiatives the district has taken is having elementary, middle and high school social workers provide intervention services to students who are most at risk. And district administrators have found that placing the counselors at elementary schools, in particular, provides students with a strong foundation to ensure their emotional and social well being.

Community involvement plays a big role in ensuring students graduate, with each school having a parent liaison and holding community outreach meetings to keep home, school and communities involved in the learning process, according to school officials.

The district also employs a Truancy Task Force in cooperation with the Newark Police Department to improve attendance. And the district has attendance counselors who visit the homes of students to encourage them to stay in school.



Newark Schools Superintendent Marion Bolden congratulates a Newark graduate.



Moreover, the Newark district has several alternative education programs to help students with their behavior, including a re-entry program for students returning to school who have been incarcerated.

Portland District *continued from page 5*

\$1 million, to fund initiatives that would advance early childhood education and school leadership development.

“With this investment, Nike is taking its commitment to a whole new level, sharing their expertise and directly helping develop and fund innovative ideas,” said Portland Schools Superintendent Vicki Phillips in a news release. She noted that Nike’s grants will be the largest contribution ever received by the Portland district from a business.

Nike President and CEO Mark Parker, whose company is reportedly Oregon’s only Fortune 500 corporation, joined Superintendent Phillips in the recent announcement. “There is no lack of creativity and willingness to try new innovative approaches in our schools,” Parker emphasized. “Our goal is to help unlock that creativity and give schools, principals, teachers and children the resources to succeed.”

‘American Stars Of Teaching’ Named

The U.S. Department of Education recently presented eight big-city teachers with American Star Teacher Awards for their efforts in raising academic achievement.

The urban teachers were among 51 teachers across the nation honored for their success in improving academic performance and making a difference in the lives of their students.

Big-city teachers in Anchorage; Washington, Chicago, St. Paul, Charlotte, Memphis, Dallas, and Kansas City, Mo., were chosen for their classroom contributions and successfully implementing the principles of the *No Child Left Behind* Act.

Teachers across all grade levels and disciplines were eligible for the award, with one teacher recognized in every state and the District of Columbia.

The U.S. Department of Education is currently accepting nominations for the 2007 American Stars of Teaching online at www.t2tweb.us/AmStar/Nominate.asp. The deadline to apply is April 1.

Minority Student Participation In College Prep Exams Up in Broward

A growing number of minority students in Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., are taking high-stakes tests and enrolling in rigorous academic courses.

From 2002 to 2005, the number of black students in the district taking the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) exam increased by 144 percent, while the number of Hispanic students taking the test increased by 193 percent.

And more Broward minority students took the SAT, with participation on the exam increasing by 62 percent from 2002 to 2006.

The number of black students taking the SAT increased by 49 percent, while the Hispanic participation rate skyrocketed with a 92 percent increase over a five-year period. In addition, Broward's Hispanic students increased their scores by nine points on the verbal portion of the SAT and by six points on the mathematics portion of the exam.

Studies have found that taking rigorous coursework in high school can lead to academic success and college enrollment, which is why Broward administrators have taken an active role in identifying and encouraging students as they enter the ninth

grade to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

The result of these efforts has been a higher rate of enrollment among Broward's minority students. From 2003 to 2006, the number of black students enrolled in AP courses increased 70 percent and the number of Hispanic students participating in AP courses increased by 68 percent, according to Russell Clement, Broward's director of student assessment and school performance.

Record Number Of NYC Students Take PSAT Exam

Last year, the New York City school district formed a partnership with the College Board to offer the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) exam free of charge to all 10th and 11th grade students. One year later, the partnership has proven to be a success with the number of district students taking the exam the highest percentage on record.

Approximately 75 percent of 10th and 11th grade New York City students took the PSAT, which prepares students to take the SAT, one of the tests most commonly accepted by colleges and universities.

The rise in PSAT participation marked a 44 percentage-point increase from the 2005-2006 school year. The district also reported a 43 percentage point increase in the number of black and Hispanic students who took the test.

Students who take the test receive personalized feedback on their performance and are provided with suggestions on specific skill improvements. The students also receive a "College Planning Package" that includes an online SAT study plan and a web-based college and career planning tool designed to help students who want to pursue post-secondary opportunities.

Dog Helps Counselor Connect With Students in Orlando

At Freedom Middle School in Orlando, Fla., students and staff alike have a soft spot for Harv, the canine on campus.

Harv works with Cindy Frongello, the school's Student Assistance and Family Empowerment (SAFE) coordinator, who provides comprehensive prevention services for students and their families, as well as intervention services for students who are at risk.

Frongello believes in the healing property of animals, which is why she underwent an almost two-year interviewing and training process sponsored by Canine Companions for Independence to become a dog handler. Harv, her companion, relieves stress on campus and opens up communication with students, giving Frongello the support she needs to be effective in her counseling role.

"Middle school boys are hard to talk to," Frongello said in the Orange County school district's newsletter the *Orange Peel*. "But when we play ball with Harv, it's easier to ask them questions and they begin



SAFE coordinator Cindy Frongello and canine companion Harv say hello to Freedom Middle School principal Tim Smith.

to open up. It flows so much better when Harv is there."

According to Frongello, Harv calms upset students, but is also a soothing presence for the school's employees. "But what has surprised me is the number of employees who come here who are stressed out and just want to get a hug from Harv – it helps them relax," she said in the *Orange Peel*.

Council of the Great City Schools ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE/POLICY CONFERENCE

March 17-20, 2007

Washington Marriott Hotel • Washington, DC



Saturday, March 17

- 7:30 am- 5:00 pm Conference registration
- 9:00 am-10:00 am Fall Conference Planning Meeting
- 10:00 am-11:00 am Blue Ribbon Corporate Group
- 11:00 am-12:00 pm Great City Colleges of Education Steering Committee Meeting
- 11:30 am-2:00 pm Lunch & Meeting of Legislative & Federal Program Liaisons
- 12:00 pm-2:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting
- 2:00pm- 5:00 pm Urban Task Force Meetings
- 5:00 pm-6:00 pm New Members & New Attendees Orientation
- 6:30 pm-8:00 pm Welcome Reception

Sunday, March 18

- 7:00 am- 5:00 pm Conference Registration
- 7:30 am- 9:00 am Breakfast Buffet
- 8:30 am-11:30 am Board of Directors Meeting
- 8:30 am-11:30 am Great City Colleges of Education Meeting
- 12:00 pm-2:00 pm Luncheon with Speaker
- 2:00 pm-5:30 pm Legislative Briefings
- 6:00 pm-7:30 pm Reception: Taste of Nashville

Monday, March 19

- 7:30 am- 9:00 am Breakfast with Speaker Secretary Spellings
- 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Legislative Briefings
- 12:30 pm-2:00 pm Luncheon with Speaker
- 2:00 pm-5:00 pm Capitol Hill Visits
- 6:00 pm-7:30 pm Reception on Capitol Hill

Tuesday, March 20

- 8:00 am- 10:30 am Breakfast with Speaker
- 10:30 am-12:00 pm Legislative Briefings
- 12:00 pm Adjourn



Los Angeles Schools Superintendent David Brewer honors 2007 Rhodes Scholar winner Roxanne Quist.

Urban Educator Named 2007 Rhodes Scholar

Roxanne Genevieve Quist, a sixth grade teacher at Charles Drew Middle School in Los Angeles, was recently named a 2007 Rhodes Scholar.

Quist was one of 32 individuals in the nation chosen for the prestigious honor, which awards scholarships for two or three years of study at the University of Oxford in England.

An English and social studies teacher, Quist began her teaching career through Teach For America, a national organization that attracts outstanding recent college graduates who commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools.

She has taught at Drew Middle School since 2005, where she has been involved in several extracurricular activities, including organizing an art enrichment program for students and serving as a chaperone for Angels Gate, a program for at-risk girls in the Los Angeles school system.

“A Rhodes Scholarship is one of the most prestigious honors that anyone can receive,” said Los Angeles school board president Marlene Canter in a press release. “Having one of our teachers honored in this way demonstrates the caliber and achievement many of our teachers bring to the classroom to educate our children.”

Rhodes Scholars are selected on a basis of high academic achievement, personal integrity and leadership potential.

Districts in Jacksonville and Shreveport Launch Drive To Reduce Dropout Rate

A campaign to combat dropout rates with community involvement was recently launched in Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., and Caddo Parish School District in Shreveport, La.

The two districts were selected by the Pew Partnership for Civic Change to implement the *Learning to Finish* campaign aimed at engaging communities in the fight to reduce dropout rates. The pilot program will bring community members, practitioners and educators together to share strategies and information on addressing the issue of graduation rates.

The *Learning to Finish* initiative is based on five major areas: academic support throughout the eighth grade year in partnership with parents, schools and students; implementation of proven dropout strategies; a community-wide discussion on the issue; a mapping of “stay in school” resources that already exist; and an evaluation plan to chart progress.

The five-year program is estimated to cost \$100,000 a year. By 2008 the Pew Partnership expects the initiative to be implemented in 25 communities across the nation.

Austin Receives \$15.6 Million For High-School Redesign

Texas’ Austin Independent School District has received a \$15.6 million investment from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation to implement a district-wide high school redesign plan.

The investment partnership aligns with the district’s developing redesign strategy for its 11 high schools. The mission is to provide upgraded, competitive high schools which graduate students equipped with the skills needed for success in their college studies and lifetime careers.

The redesign will result in significant changes, such as small learning communities, advisory periods, student mentoring programs, and other research-based practices for the students. District staff will receive targeted technical assistance, professional development opportunities and community engagement support.

The reform will be individualized for each campus to ensure tailored success and Austin administrators are optimistic about the future success. “This revolutionary partnership will change the fundamental way in which high schools operate...,” said Patrick Patterson, principal of LBJ High School in a press release. “This partnership will allow campus leaders such as myself to provide greater opportunities for success for more of our students.”

Changes have already begun to occur in recent years as the district has increased focus on high school reform, based on the “new 3Rs”—academic rigor, relevant coursework, and stronger relationships between students and adults. Yet, while some of the high schools boast high student achievement, many students continue to struggle academically.

“...Our goal is to deliver timely, relevant and easy-to-use achievement information to principals and teachers,” said Zeynep Young, program director for the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.

Council of the Great City Schools Calendar of Events for Year 2007

Executive Committee Meeting	Jan. 12-13, 2007	Los Angeles, CA
HRD/Personnel Directors Meeting	Feb. 28-March 3, 2007	Orlando, FL
Legislative/Policy Conference	March 17-20, 2007	Washington, DC
Chief Operating Officers Conference	April 18-21, 2007	Atlanta, GA
Bilingual Directors Meeting	May 10-12, 2007	Miami, FL
Management Information System & IT Symposium	June, 2007	TBD
Public Relations Executives Meeting	July 13-15, 2007	Phoenix, AZ
Curriculum Directors Meeting/ Research/Assessment Symposium	July 12-14, 2007	Portland, OR
Executive Committee Meeting	July 20-21, 2007	Anchorage, AK
Annual Fall Conference	Oct. 31-Nov. 5, 2007	Nashville, TN
Chief Financial Officers Conference	TBD	TBD

Six Urban Districts Receive Grants To Aid High-Need Schools

In Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., most of the district's lowest performing schools have the least experienced teachers.

To alleviate this problem, the school system created *Mission Possible*, a teacher incentive program designed to attract, retain and reward teachers at high-poverty, disadvantaged schools.

The program recently received a much-needed boost with a \$8 million grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

The grant is one of 16 presented to school districts across the nation as part of the new Teacher Incentive Fund program designed to reward educators who take on tough jobs and show results in high-need schools.

The grants will be used to provide financial incentives to teachers and principals in schools where at least 30 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Guilford was not the only big-city school system to receive a grant. Also receiving grants were Chicago Public Schools (\$27 million); Denver Public Schools (\$22 million); Houston Independent School District (\$11 million); Dallas Independent School District (\$22 million); and the School District of Philadelphia (\$20 million).

Guilford County Schools will use its grant to expand its *Mission Possible* program to seven additional schools.

"This grant will extend our efforts immensely in attracting and retaining the best educators possible in our most needy schools," said Guilford Schools Superintendent Terry Grier in a news statement.

"Because of the higher salaries and benefits offered by private industry, we have to increase the pool of qualified teachers for our classrooms. This grant will possibly give even more students the boost they need to succeed."

Louisville Students Bring Healthy Smiles To the Community

Students at Central High School in Louisville, Ky., are making a difference in the community one smile at a time. Twenty-five students recently enjoyed a hands-on-experience in dentistry when they participated in Smile Kentucky!, a program that visits elementary schools delivering dental education and treatment.

The students, who are seniors in Central's dentistry program, worked with volunteer dentists, hygienists and University of Louisville faculty to provide more than 7,000 children in third through sixth grade with free dental screening and more than 300 with free treatment.

In addition to assisting with screenings, the seniors provided information to younger students on important dental practices, including brushing, flossing and

limiting daily sugar intake.

The program helps students "develop confidence in public speaking, and it allows them to share their educational background in dentistry with others," said Central dentistry teacher Wendy Robertson in the Louisville school district's newspaper the *Parent Connection*.

Central dental student Myayara Haynes appreciated the experience gained working with Smile Kentucky!, which gives students a taste of what their jobs will be like when they enter the dentistry profession.

Smile Kentucky! is recognized by the American Dental Association as a national model for public health promotion and visits approximately 14 Jefferson County schools each year.



Grammy Award Winner Visits Dallas Alma Mater

Grammy award-winning singer Erykah Badu holds the rapt attention of students during her recent visit to the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas. The singer, who has won four Grammy awards, is a 1989 graduate of the school. During her visit, she not only talked with the students but took a dance class with one of her former teachers.

Grants Available To High Schools

High school students can receive grants of up to \$10,000 as part of a national initiative designed to support young people who engage in invention and design new solutions to real world problems.

Under the Lemelson-MIT InvenTeams initiative, teams composed of high school students, teachers and mentors identify a problem they want to solve, conduct research and develop an invention as an in-class or extracurricular project.

The teams are encouraged to work with community partners and are presented with grants of up to \$10,000 to support their efforts.

InvenTeams was launched in 2002 as a way to excite high school students about science, math, engineering and entrepreneurship to inspire a new generation of inventors. The initiative is part of the Lemelson-MIT Program, founded by inventor Jerome H. Lemelson, which encourages students to pursue science careers.

Applications for the national grants initiative can be found at web.mit.edu/inven-teams. The deadline to apply is April 27, 2007.

Great City Grads



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

U.S. Supreme Court Justice

1950 graduate

James Madison High School

New York City Public Schools

Atlanta Student Newspaper Wins Gallup Award

Atlanta's Grady High School student newspaper, *The Southerner*, won the George H. Gallup Award for 2006-2007.

This is the second year *The Southerner* was nationally recognized for journalism excellence.

The Gallup award honors high school student publications based on extraordinary improvements, exceptional service to the school and community, sustained leadership through effective editorial campaigns, and in-depth reporting on special issues.

The Southerner's magazine supplemental, *Nexus*, which appears in alternate issues of the school newspaper, was highly favored.

"The cultural coverage provided through *Nexus* was rich in variety of writing and models of packaging," Gallup judges wrote. "The full color graphics combined with smartly written stories made for an excellent overall package."

The national journalism award is named for the founder of the Quill and Scroll International Honor Society for high school journalists.



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

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