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## 'Real Change' Obama Portrait

With more than 4,000 coins, J.C. Lenochoan, an art teacher in New Jersey's Newark Public Schools, created "Real Change," a portrait of President Barack Obama based on Obama's call for change. "I saw the coins not only as a metaphor for 'real change' but also as metal armor to protect him from the sicknesses of racism," said the artist, whose work has been exhibited in New York, Los Angeles and Europe.

## Inaugural Highlights

Urban school students around the nation and the Council of the Great City Schools celebrated the inauguration of President Barack Obama on Jan. 20. See pages 4-7.

## Magazine Ranks Urban Schools Among Nation's Best

Thirty-three schools in 21 urban districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools rank among the top 100 high schools in the nation, the *Urban Educator* found in a review of the recent *U.S. News & World Report's* second annual ranking of "America's Best High Schools."

In December 2007, when the news-magazine released its first-ever ranking, 33 schools in 17 urban school districts in the Council made the Gold Medal list. Four more Council districts made the top-100 cut among more than 21,000 public high schools in 48 states analyzed in the magazine's recent 2008 rankings.

The highest ranking big-city school is Design and Architectural Senior High in Miami – the fifth best among the nation's 100 top high schools, moving up from eighth place earlier.

Other urban schools in the Council that ranked in the top 20 of the 100 Gold Medal Schools are:

- Academic Magnet High School in North Charleston, S.C., No. 9;
- Benjamin Franklin Senior High in New Orleans, No. 16;
- Early College at Guilford in Greensboro, N.C., No. 17; and

**Magazine Ranks** continued on page 3

## New Education Secretary Expected To Address Urban Educators

Virtually every March, the U.S. secretary of education pays the nation's urban education leaders a visit at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference.

This year's conference, March 14-17, should be no exception, as Secretary Arne Duncan, formerly CEO of Chicago Public Schools, is expected to address his former urban education colleagues.

Education priorities of the new Obama Administration will be front and center in discussions at the conference to be held at the Washington Marriott Hotel.

Reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind* Act will also take center stage.

**Education Secretary** continued on page 9



As CEO of Chicago Public Schools, Arne Duncan participated in a Council of the Great City Schools town hall meeting in October before being selected U.S. secretary of education.

## Urban Educators Win Surprise \$25,000 Milken Awards

In October, Cheryl Watkins, the principal of Chicago's John J. Pershing West Magnet School, invited her students, staff and local education officials such as Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan to a special school-wide assembly she had organized to discuss her school's academic progress.

But during the assembly, the real purpose of Duncan's visit was revealed: to present an unsuspecting Watkins with a \$25,000 Milken National Educator Award for furthering excellence in education.

Sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, the award honors outstanding elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals at schools across the nation. Known as the "Oscars of teaching" by *Teaching Magazine*, this year 70 elementary educators received the award, which alternates yearly between elementary and secondary educators.

In addition to Watkins, teachers in Chicago, Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Shreveport, St. Paul, Omaha, Wichita, Minneapolis, Portland, Ore., and Clark County (Las Vegas) also received awards. Two teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District and two from Chicago Public Schools received awards.

Watkins has been the principal of Pershing West Magnet School since it opened its doors in 2005, as part of Renaissance 2010, an initiative by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley to create more high quality schools. Under the *No Child Left Behind* law, the school has achieved adequate yearly progress every year.

"I have an amazing faculty and staff," said a shocked and tearful Watkins as she accepted her award.

The Milken Educator Awards were established in 1985 to recognize the importance of outstanding educators and encourage talented young people to enter the teaching profession. Recipients are recom-



Then-Chicago Schools CEO Arne Duncan congratulates Cheryl Watkins, the principal of John J. Pershing West Magnet School in Chicago, for receiving a Milken National Educator Award. Photo Credit: Milken Family Foundation

mended for the award by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's department of education and must have demonstrated exceptional educational talent, exemplary educational accomplishments and an engaging and inspiring presence that motivates students, colleagues and the community.

Since its inception, the Milken Educator award program has awarded \$60 million to more than 2,300 educators.



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### Urban Educator

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## L.A., Chicago and Nashville Select New Leaders

Ramon Cortines has served as the superintendent of the nation's largest school district—New York City—as well as led several city school districts in California.



Ramon Cortines

His experience is one of the reasons the veteran educator was recently selected to take the reins of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Cortines is no stranger to the nation's second largest school system, having served as senior deputy superintendent in helping manage the district's finances. And in 2000, he served as interim superintendent for seven months.

Cortines succeeds David Brewer, who had been at the helm of the 688,000-student school system for two years.

In the nation's third largest school system, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley recently selected Chicago Transit Authority

(CTA) President Ron Huberman as CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

He succeeds Arne Duncan, President Obama's choice to serve as the U.S. secretary of education after Duncan led Chicago Public Schools for the past seven years.

### Nashville Names New Chief

Also selecting a new leader recently was Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools in Tennessee, which named an educator with experience in reforming urban schools to lead the 75,000-student school system.

Jesse Register was named the district's new director of schools, replacing interim director Chris Henson.

Before coming to Nashville, Register served as senior adviser for district leadership for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, consulting with school leaders across the nation on issues such as high school reform and improving urban education.



Jesse Register

"My goal as director will be to help develop the potential that exists in the district and the community," said Register. "I think with some time, hard work, a unified and common vision and an intense focus on improving student achievement for all students, we can turn this district into one of the best in the country."

### Contract Extended

The board of education for Milwaukee Public Schools recently extended the contract of Superintendent William Andreopoulos for an additional 15 months to June 2010.

Andreopoulos has led the district since 2002.

## Denver Superintendent Now U.S. Senator

The U.S. Senate begins the new year with a number of new faces, but only one of those new senators has operated an urban school district with 75,000 students, 152 schools and 13,000 employees.

Michael Bennet, the superintendent of Denver Public Schools, was recently appointed by Gov. Bill Ritter to serve in the U.S. Senate. Bennet replaces Ken Salazar, who was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as his secretary of interior.

Bennet has been the superintendent of the Denver school system since 2005 and under his tenure, full-day kindergarten programs have expanded and teachers who have improved student achievement or work in high-poverty schools have received higher salaries. In addition, voters in November passed a \$454 million bond issue, the largest bond measure ever approved for the school district.

In the *Washington Post*, Obama praised the selection of Bennet as an "excellent choice" and someone who "has shown himself willing to challenge old thinking and stale policies." Bennet plans to run for a full term in 2010 when his Senate seat expires.

### New Leader Named



Tom Boasberg

Succeeding Bennet as superintendent of the Denver school system is Tom Boasberg. Since 2007, he has served as the district's chief operating officer.

Boasberg has led the school system's efforts to improve central services to schools, balance the district's budgets after many years of cuts, and introduce new schools in areas where schools had been performing poorly.

**Magazine Ranks** continued from page 1

- School of Science & Engineering in Dallas, No. 18

*U.S. News & World Report* reviewed the performance of high schools with a three-step formula to determine rankings. It measured how each school's students performed on state-mandated tests; evaluated academic performance of each school's disadvantaged students; and analyzed the success of schools in providing college-level coursework.

Council districts in New York City, Long Beach, Boston, Nashville, Chicago, Buffalo, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Jacksonville, Fresno, Los Angeles, Houston, Palm Beach, Philadelphia, Denver and Toledo rounded out the 21 urban school systems with high schools ranked among America's 100 best.





## Urban School Leaders Witness Historic Inauguration

With offices on the Avenue of the Presidents, the Council of the Great City Schools invited the nation's urban school leaders to get an up-close viewing of the Inaugural Parade for President Barack Obama on Jan. 20.

Superintendents and school board members from Seattle to Philadelphia participated in an Inaugural Day Parade Reception at the Council, located on Pennsylvania Avenue just three blocks from the White House.

The urban educators were among some 1.8 million onlookers in the nation's capital celebrating the historic inauguration of the nation's first African American president.

In his inaugural address, President Obama made reference to schools. "...Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many...And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age...."

### **Advice to Obama**

Guests at the Council's Inaugural Reception weighed in on what it will mean

for urban education to have Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, and offered advice to the new president in spot *Urban Educator* interviews.

"Nothing will be more important than the intersection of leadership in learning for our urban communities," said Superintendent Clifford Janey of New Jersey's Newark Public Schools. "He sets the tone, the direction and the creed of leadership which we need at the city and school district level."

To Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson, President Obama should "try to provide accountability and funding to close the [racial and economic] achievement gap" among students.

Brian Morris, board chairman of the Baltimore City Public Schools, noted, "I would encourage him to remember what was important to *him* as a student -- things like a clean, safe and caring environment; competent and passionate teachers. These are the things that are still important to students today."

Gary Yee, a board member of the Oakland Unified School District in California,

stressed, "If he {Obama} thinks about education for Malia and Sasha {his daughters}, that would be good enough" when considering education for all American children. "Barack and Michelle are like any parents. They want the best for their children."

Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Beverly Hall believes the nation needs more and better teachers. She had said recently at a press conference that she would advise President Obama "to look at what really needs to happen to get the brightest and the best to enter our profession."

Superintendent Arlene Ackerman of the School District of Philadelphia pointed out that she would tell the new president, "Access to a quality education from birth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade is the new civil rights issue. Without the opportunity to engage in high quality schooling, young people won't be prepared to take their place in an emerging society with global implications."

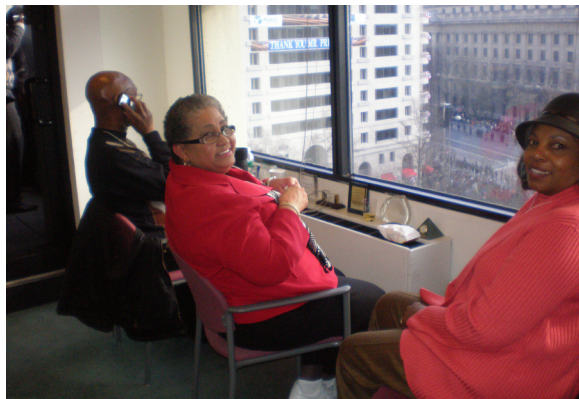
Felton Williams, a board member of the Long Beach Unified School District in California, would advise Obama, "There are so many issues; take them one day at a time."

**Urban School Leaders** continued on page 5

**Urban School Leaders** *continued from page 4*

Baltimore school board chairman Brian Morris stands on the Council balcony to watch the parade.

Atlanta Schools Superintendent Beverly Hall, center, has a front row seat to the parade festivities.



Newark Schools Superintendent Clifford Janey poses with a cutout of President Barack Obama.

Oakland school board member Gary Yee relaxes in the Council lobby after a long day of parade watching.



## U. of Toledo Offers College 'Guarantee' To 5 Ohio Urban Districts

Students in five big-city school districts in Ohio will get the opportunity to attend college free, as a result of a new scholarship program.

The UT Guarantee program is providing free tuition to the University of Toledo (UT) for academically qualified students from public school systems in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo. Students must also demonstrate financial need to be eligible for the scholarship and have at least a 3.0 grade point average.

The scholarship program is an effort by the university to attract students from urban school districts who want to attend a postsecondary institution but may not view college as a realistic opportunity because of the cost.

"We want to change that mindset and get our urban students to begin preparing themselves for a university education when they're in junior high school," said Lawrence Burns, UT's vice president for external affairs. "We've taken financial need out of the equation."

The Cleveland Municipal School District recently held an event for 500 seniors and their parents to learn more about the scholarship program. Participants met with UT admissions staff, learned about various academic programs, listened to a panel discussion with current and former UT students from Cleveland and heard a live web message from UT President Lloyd Jacobs.

"The UT Guarantee is a very exciting opportunity and we want to do everything we can to make sure our students and parents are fully aware of it," said Cleveland Schools CEO Eugene Sanders.

The UT Guarantee is good for all four years, as long as its recipients maintain a 3.0 GPA and complete 30 credit hours each school year.



## Urban Students Celebrate Inauguration

On the day Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, students at the Lincoln Academy for Boys in Toledo, Ohio, where most of the students are African American, showed their patriotic pride by wearing red, white and blue.

"You will always tell the kid you can be anybody you want to be, but knowing you can be the president that's huge," said Lincoln Academy Principal Teresa Quinn in the *Toledo Blade*. "It's an ah-ha moment, 'I can really be the president of the United States. I see this man and I see myself as an African American boy and I can do it, too.'"

The students at Lincoln Academy were not alone in celebrating the historic inauguration of the nation's first African American president.

Minneapolis Public Schools wanted to make sure all of the district's 33,000 students were able to view Obama take the oath of office. So the school system set up an internal network that enabled it to stream the live broadcast of the presidential inauguration to its students, many who gathered in auditoriums to witness the ceremony.

"For our students, watching the inauguration of President Barack Obama...live on television, surrounded by their fellow students, teachers principals and community members was a defining educational moment," said Minneapolis Schools Superintendent William Green. "They will always know they were a witness to history in the making."

In Buffalo, students at the International Preparatory School watched the swearing-in ceremony and were joined by Superintendent James Williams. Many of the students are immigrants so the inauguration was very moving to them.

In addition to watching the inauguration, many districts used the day as a teaching moment. The Milwaukee Board of School Directors passed a resolution

**Celebrate Inauguration** continued on page 10



Students from Jones High School in Orlando, Fla., pose in their finest attire before attending an Inaugural Ball in Washington, D.C., hosted by a Florida congresswoman.



First-grade students at Picotte Elementary in Omaha, Neb., participate in a "ticker tape parade" to celebrate the inauguration of Barack Obama as president.



Students at Lyndale Elementary in Minneapolis watch the Inauguration Ceremony on a big screen in the gymnasium.





A young student from PS 64 Frederick Law Olmsted school in Buffalo helps a fellow student with his tie before they join the dancing at their school's Inaugural Ball held in the gymnasium.



A student at George Elementary in Jackson, Miss., portrays President Barack Obama in a play called "A Walk in Obama's Shoes." The play depicted several milestones in Obama's life.



Fifth-grade students at Andrews Elementary School in Austin, Texas stand as the National Anthem was played on television at the conclusion of the Inauguration Ceremony. Photo credit: Austin Independent School District

## Civil Rights Pioneers Honored In Jackson, Miss.

Jackson Public Schools recently honored three Mississippi civil rights pioneers by naming new schools in their names at a dedication ceremony held at the state capitol.

Gladys Noel Bates, a former Mississippi educator who filed a lawsuit in 1948 charging salary discrimination against African American teachers and principals, participated in the ceremony. The 88-year-old who resides in Denver is the only living pioneer of the three honored.



Honoree Gladys Noel Bates

"This celebration today is a testimony to the victory of right winning out, no matter the time taken," Bates said. "It does seem fitting in this month of January 2009, as the winds of change wash through Washington, D.C., that Jackson, Miss., also reflects in such a momentous way...."

In addition to Bates, schools will be named for Thomas Cardozo, a state superintendent of education who died in 1881, and Henry Kirksey, a state legislator and activist who died in 2005.

"Today is a grand event in the history of our city," said Jackson Public Schools Superintendent Lonnie Edwards Sr. at the dedication, which was held a few days before the national observance of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama.

Some 50 suggestions of names were made to the Jackson school district's board of trustees for the three new schools – an elementary and two middle schools. The schools will be built with funds from a 2006 school bond referendum.

## Urban Student Enrollment Appears More Up Than Down

Big-city school systems in Baltimore, Denver, Charleston, S.C., and Portland, Ore., have seen student enrollment increases this school year for the first time in years.

"The growth in student numbers suggests new academic options are working and parent confidence in city schools is building," said Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Andres Alonso in a news release.

Two of the fastest growing school districts, Clark County in Las Vegas and Palm Beach in Florida, are experiencing a slowdown in student enrollment.

Clark County, the nation's fifth largest school system, is still showing an increase — more than 311,000 students this year compared with more than 308,000 last year — at a slower rate. Earlier in the decade, some 12,000 new students a year poured into the Nevada district.

In Palm Beach, enrollment is decreasing after years of dramatic growth, and is attributed to the downturn in the real estate market.

School systems in Austin, Tex., and Louisville, Ky., have shown a growing trend in student enrollment over the past five years.

Other urban districts reporting a rise in enrollments this year in an informal *Urban Educator* survey: Dallas, Guilford County (Greensboro, N.C.), Omaha, Salt Lake City, Seattle and Wichita.

Some big-city school districts, such as Birmingham, Ala., Buffalo, N.Y., and Columbus, Ohio, have seen enrollments drop because of shrinking city populations or the growth of charter schools.

Other urban school systems reporting a decline in enrollment this school year: Duval County (Jacksonville, Fla.), Hillsborough County (Tampa, Fla.), Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Sacramento City.

## Atlanta and Indianapolis Superintendents Candidates for Top Award

Two big-city school chiefs are among the four finalists for 2009 National Superintendent of the Year honors.



Beverly Hall

Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Beverly Hall and Indianapolis Public Schools Superintendent Eugene White are in the running for the American Association of School



Eugene White

Administrators (AASA) top award celebrating the contributions and leadership of public school superintendents. The other two superintendents lead school systems in Trussville, Ala., and Fayette County, Ky.

The winner will be announced at AASA's national conference Feb. 20 in San Francisco. The coveted award last year was bestowed on then-Superintendent Rudolph Crew of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the only urban educator of the four finalists.

In mid-January, the four finalists for 2009 participated in a press event at the National Press Club in Washington to respond to how they would advise the new president on educational reform issues. Atlanta Superintendent Hall would tell President Obama that the nation needs more and better teachers.

Hall and White joined two other urban school leaders — former Richmond, Va., schools superintendent Deborah Jewell-Sherman and Salt Lake City School



Carol Johnson

District Superintendent McKell Withers — as AA-SA's state Superintendents of the Year for 2009.

Another big-city school leader was recently named Superintendent of the Year by the National Alliance of Black School Educators. The group named Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson for demonstrating quality leadership in student achievement.

## School District In Tampa Earns 'A' Grade

Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa now joins three other urban school systems in the state that earned overall "A" grades in the Florida Department of Education's 2008 annual report card.

The district initially received a "B" grade, but successfully appealed to the state to earn an "A" rating. The Sunshine State issues grades to schools and districts, ranging from "A" to "F," primarily based on student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The other Florida urban districts with perfect scores are the School District of Palm Beach, Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale and Orange County Public Schools in Orlando.



# Council of the Great City Schools

## ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE/POLICY CONFERENCE

**March 14-17, 2009**

Washington Marriott Hotel • Washington, DC



### Saturday, March 14

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 Advisory Group Meeting
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 15

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 Portland

### Monday, March 16

7:30 am- 9:00 am	Breakfast with Speaker
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 17

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

**Education Secretary** *continued from page 1*

"Education is ... the civil rights issue of our generation – the only sure path out of poverty and the only way to achieve a more equal and just society," Duncan testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions during his Jan. 13 confirmation hearing.

"Having been a school superintendent for seven years, I know that having a strong partner in Washington is critical – but I also know that an overbearing federal bureaucracy can impede innovation and progress," he emphasized.

"I look forward to working with you in the years ahead to strike the right balance," he told the committee before the Senate confirmed him on Inauguration Day.

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**"Education...is the civil rights issue of our generation-- the only sure path out of poverty and the only way to achieve a more equal and just society."**

— Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education

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In a statement applauding Duncan as education secretary, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly said, "The reform-minded Arne Duncan understands the importance of urban schools in the national debate about the status and future of public education. He also knows the challenges facing the nation's big-city public school systems as the leader of the third largest school district in the country..."

"As U.S. secretary of education, if he can help us improve other big-city schools as he helped Chicago's school system, then his contribution will have been profound."

Registration information for the Council's Annual Legislative/Policy Conference can be accessed at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

## Education is Key Component of New Economic Stimulus Package

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

Even before taking office in January, the new Obama Administration and the leadership of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress began working on a massive Economic Stimulus package to jumpstart the deteriorating national economy. This \$825 billion stimulus bill has begun to move through Congress. As this article goes to print, the full House of Representatives is about to vote on \$550 billion in spending provisions under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and \$275 billion in tax provisions under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Tax Act of 2009.

Education spending represents over 15 percent of the Economic Stimulus package moving through the legislative process. In elementary and secondary education, some \$28 billion is provided to expand various federal categorical programs over a two-year period, including \$13 billion for new Title I grants (of which \$2 billion would be for school improvement grants), \$13 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants, and \$1 billion for Education Technology grants, as well as funding for several smaller programs. A new \$14 billion School Modernization, Renovation and Repair program is also being initiated to address the declining school infrastructure and the deferred repairs experienced in virtually every school district. States are being directed to distribute these school facilities grants to local school districts based on their Title I allocations within 30 days of receiving the funds from the federal government. Higher education institutions also are provided with substantial funding, including increases in Pell Grants for low-income college students.

A new \$79 billion State Fiscal Stabilization Fund is also created in the House bill to provide grants to help restore funding that has been cut from state budgets due to the economic recession. Some \$39 billion over two years will be dedicated to restoring cuts in state education funding for K-12 and higher education, with the elementary and secondary portion of the Stabilization Fund allotted through current state aid formu-



las. Some \$15 billion also would be provided by the secretary of education for incentive grants to states that have made significant progress in addressing inequities in the distribution of qualified and experienced teaching and improving data systems and assessments. Fifty percent of any Incentive Grants awarded to a state would be allotted to school districts based on their Title I allocations. The final \$25 billion in Stabilization Funds would be allotted for state-determined high-priority needs, such as public safety or other services including education.

In the tax portion of the Economic Stimulus package, \$20 billion in interest-free School Construction Bonds are provided over a two-year period through a tax credit mechanism modeled after the America's Better Classrooms (ABC) legislation created by Ways and Means Chairman Charles Rangel (D-NY). Another \$1.4 billion would be provided under the current Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) program, which supports school renovation and repair but not new construction.

The scope of this \$825 billion Economic Stimulus package is unprecedented. And, the amount of federal assistance directed toward education is also unprecedented. The Council of the Great City Schools estimates that at least \$15 billion of the House package would flow directly to member urban school districts. While the Council continues to work on several technical provisions and funding formulas in the bill, the overall stimulus package warrants the strong support of all of the Great City Schools.

After the House completes work on the package, the bill will go to the Senate for consideration. The Obama Administration and Congress have projected that final legislation could be enacted by mid-February. Education funding, including the new School Repair Grants, could become available as early as March or April. Urban districts should begin planning immediately for the effective and strategic use of these new education stimulus funds.

### Celebrate Inauguration *continued from page 6*

encouraging schools to integrate inaugural activities into their curricula.

While most students celebrated in their schools, some lucky students were able to travel to Washington, D.C., and witness the inauguration in person.

Mariah Harrington, a junior at Boston Latin School, traveled to the nation's capi-

tol to serve as a student reporter for WCAI-FM, a National Public Radio station.

More than 300 students and staff from Alaska's Anchorage School District traveled to D.C., to view the swearing-in.

And for 43 students from Jones High School in Orlando, Fla., who won an all-expense paid trip to D.C., to attend the in-

auguration, it was the trip of a lifetime.

The students were guests at an Inaugural Ball hosted by Florida congresswoman Corrine Brown and attended the swearing-in ceremony of Obama.

"It was truly a momentous occasion for our students," said Belynda Pinkston, assistant principal.



## Alternative High School Partnership Created in Newark

In an effort to prevent students from dropping out of school, New Jersey's Newark Public Schools has partnered with Newark Mayor Cory Booker to create nine student-centered alternative high schools.

Under the Newark-Alternative High School Initiative Partnership, high schools will be created that offer a challenging and relevant curriculum, close student-teacher relationships, a personalized school culture, leadership development and supportive partnerships.

Newark is one of three pilot cities nationwide, along with Nashville and Indianapolis, in which the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) has established a "Place-Based Partnership," in which all three cities are opening new alternative schools. AHSI is a network of 12 youth development organizations supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and co-convened by the National League of Cities and Big Picture Learning.

The partnership in Newark also includes several other educational and economic development groups that will assist in developing the alternative high school models, including Essex County College and the Gateway to College National Network. All of the groups signed an agreement pledging a three-year commitment to the overall effort.

Alternative high schools and programs opened under the Newark-AHSI partnership will include DiplomaPlus schools, which enable students to progress at their own pace in personalized learning environments, and four Performance Learning Centers, which will offer self-paced online courses for rapid credit recovery, personal support and project-based learning.

"Newark Public Schools welcomes AHSI's assistance in transforming its alternative schools, and looks forward to spreading stronger student-centered practices throughout all of Newark's high schools," said Newark Schools Superintendent Clifford Janey.



Newark Schools Superintendent Clifford Janey, right, is joined by, left to right, Essex County College President Zachary Yamba and Newark Mayor Cory Booker at a press conference announcing the partnership between Newark Public Schools and the city of Newark.

## Albuquerque Board Approves Conduct Code

School districts have implemented codes of conduct for students who participate in extracurricular activities, but Albuquerque Public Schools has taken it one additional step: instituting a code of conduct for parents.

The district's athletic and activity code of conduct applies to all middle and high school students participating in extracurricular activities or athletics as well as their parents and spectators.

**Conduct Code** continued on page 12

### Council of the Great City Schools 2009 Calendar of Events

Chief Human Resources Officers Meeting	Feb. 4-6, 2009	Memphis, TN
Title I Directors Meeting	March 13-14, 2009	Washington, DC
Legislative/Policy Conference	March 14-17, 2009	Washington, DC
Chief Operating Officers Conference	April 21-24, 2009	Fort Lauderdale, FL
Bilingual Directors Meeting	May 6-9, 2009	Minneapolis, MN
E-Rate Meeting	June 1-2, 2009	Cleveland, OH
Chief Information Officers Meeting	June 3-6, 2009	Cleveland, OH
Public Relations Executives Meeting	June 26-28, 2009	San Francisco, CA
Curriculum Directors & Research/Assessment Symposium	July 16-17, 2009	Chicago, IL
Executive Committee Meeting	July 17-18, 2009	Boston, MA
Annual Fall Conference	Oct. 28-Nov. 1, 2009	Portland, OR
Chief Financial Officers Conference	November 17-20, 2009	Nashville, TN

**Conduct Code** *continued from page 11*

The code lists several expectations of parents and fans, such as encouraging good sportsmanship and showing respect for the decisions and authority of officials.

It also states that parents and fans should not engage in unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, parent or staff member.

The code was the brainchild of school board member Marty Esquivel, who was upset by the behavior of parents and fans who screamed at a referee during his daughter's middle school basketball game. He and other board members decided that adopting a code of conduct would help make athletics a positive experience for students, families and friends.

"If we can use the code as a teaching tool and a way to remind everyone about the true essence of interscholastic athletics, then it's going to make us all better in the long run," said Esquivel.

Parents and students must sign a document agreeing to abide by the code. Students who do not sign the form will be unable to practice, play or participate in a sport or activity.

## Little Rock School District Joins Council

Little Rock School District in Arkansas has joined the Council of the Great City Schools. The school system serves 26,757 students.

The district was thrust into the national spotlight in 1957 over the issue of integration when nine black students were denied entrance to Central High School and President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered federal troops to escort the students into the school.

Famous alumni of the Little Rock school system include Gen. Wesley Clark, former NATO commander, and Bruce Lindsey, a senior adviser to then-President Bill Clinton.



## Great City Grads



Photo Credit: Center for American Progress

### Melody Barnes

Director of Domestic Policy Council

1982 graduate

Thomas Jefferson-George Wythe-Huguenot High School Complex

Richmond Public Schools, Va.



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