

## IN THIS ISSUE



- New Leader in Chicago, **p.3**
- Homeless Initiative, **p.7**
- LEGISLATIVE**
- Congressional Delays, **p.10**

## Urban School Districts Take In Relocated Puerto Rican Students

Tenisha Marie Bennett Rodriguez vividly remembers the night last September when Hurricane Maria made landfall in her hometown of Quebradillas, Puerto Rico. The storm ripped off half of the metal roof that covered the house she shared with her 5-year-old daughter Melody, filling every room with floodwater and leaving almost all of their belongings in ruins.

The days that followed were painful as she and her daughter struggled with a lack of electricity, often waiting in line for 15 hours to get gas, which was limited to \$10 of fuel a person. And at the only working ATM in town, Rodriguez had to wait in line for 10 hours only to be told she could withdraw just \$40 a day. Clean water and food were scarce and expensive and most days she and her daughter ate only one meal.

**Puerto Rican** continued on page 6

## Des Moines Superintendent Shelters Teen Whose Family Was Deported

Thomas Ahart is the superintendent of Iowa's Des Moines Public Schools and Jennifer Galdames is an 11th-grade student at the district's Roosevelt High School. And the first time the two met was not at a school function, but when Ahart decided to provide her with a home after her parents were deported.

The story of how they became a part of each other's lives was the focus of a recent article that appeared in the *Des Moines Register*.

Galdames was born in Guatemala and three years ago, at the age of 14, she traveled to the United States to join her mother, who had left her in Guatemala with relatives when she was 18 months old. Her father had been killed in Guatemala years



**Des Moines Public Schools Superintendent Thomas Ahart, right, with his family, left to right, stepson Eli, wife Jami and Jennifer Galdames, whose parents were deported.**

earlier, a victim of the violence affecting Central America.

Galdames' mother arranged for a smuggler to escort her to the border in Texas and kept a lawyer on standby.

**Des Moines** continued on page 4

## U.S. Education Policy and Legislation Focus of Conference

Big-city school leaders will discuss 2018 education priorities for the Trump Administration and education legislation on Capitol Hill when they converge at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference, March 17-20, in Washington.

Discussions will also focus on 2018-19 federal education funding, the status of the

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, updates on Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability and state plans, and prospects for school infrastructure funding at the landmark Mayflower Hotel in the nation's capital.

Conference highlights are on page 9. To register, access [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

2018 Annual Legislative/Policy Conference  
Registration Brochure



March 17-20, 2018  
The Mayflower Hotel • Washington, D.C.

## Books and Barbers Program Flourishes in Fort Worth

When students in Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District go to their local barbershop, they are not only going to get their hair cut, but are also getting the opportunity to improve their reading skills.

The Books and Barbers Reading Program is an initiative launched in the summer of 2017 by the Fort Worth school system and pairs the school district with local barbershops in an effort to boost literacy.

Each participating barbershop is equipped with bookshelves, a variety of books, many with multicultural themes, and helpful and willing barbers ready to support their young patrons reading skills.

The initiative is specifically aimed at boosting the literacy rate of the district's African American students, who make up 23 percent of the student population. In 2016-2017, only one in four black students in the district were reading on the appropriate grade level.

The partnership has expanded to include nine barbershops, who not only provide students with extra reading practice, but a comfortable environment. "We know the barbershops

are places that our young men are going to fairly regularly," said Sherry Breed, chief of equity and excellence for the district, in an article in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. "... And they have an established relationship with their barber."

Roger Foggie, a barber participating in the program, encourages his customers to read aloud and answer questions about the book they are reading.

He says that many of the older boys

**Books, Barbers** continued on page 3



A student in Texas' Fort Worth Independent School District reads while getting his hair cut by a barber as part of the district's Books with Barbers program. Photo credit: Joyce Marshall, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*



### Council officers

#### Chair

Darlene Driver  
Superintendent, Milwaukee

#### Chair-elect

Lawrence Feldman  
Board Member, Miami-Dade

#### Secretary-Treasurer

Eric Gordon  
CEO, Cleveland

Executive Director  
Michael Casserly  
mcasserly@cgcs.org

Editor  
Henry Duvall  
hduvall@cgcs.org

Associate Editor  
Tonya Harris  
tharris@cgcs.org

Staff Writer  
Darrell Robinson  
drobinson@cgcs.org

A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 69 of the nation's largest urban public school districts.

Albuquerque  
Anchorage  
Arlington, TX  
Atlanta  
Austin  
Baltimore  
Birmingham  
Boston  
Bridgeport  
Broward Co.  
Buffalo  
Charlotte

Chicago  
Cincinnati  
Clark Co.  
Cleveland  
Columbus  
Dallas  
Dayton  
Denver  
Des Moines  
Detroit  
El Paso  
Fort Worth

Fresno  
Greensboro  
Hawaii  
Houston  
Indianapolis  
Jackson  
Jacksonville  
Kansas City  
Long Beach  
Los Angeles  
Louisville  
Miami-Dade

Milwaukee  
Minneapolis  
Nashville  
New Orleans  
New York City  
Newark  
Norfolk  
Oakland  
Oklahoma City  
Omaha  
Orange Co.  
Palm Beach

Philadelphia  
Pinellas Co.  
Pittsburgh  
Portland  
Providence  
Richmond  
Rochester  
Sacramento  
San Antonio  
San Diego  
San Francisco  
Santa Ana

Seattle  
Shelby Co.  
St. Louis  
St. Paul  
Tampa  
Toledo  
Tulsa  
Washington DC  
Wichita

All news items should be submitted to:  
Urban Educator

Council of the Great City Schools  
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 1100N • Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 393-2427 • (202) 393-2400 (fax)

Find the Council on:



# Changes at the Helm: Chicago, NYC, L.A., and Richmond School Districts



**Janice Jackson**

The nation's third largest school system begins 2018 with new leadership. Janice Jackson, the district's chief education officer, was recently named chief executive officer of the 400,000-student Chicago Public Schools.

She succeeds Forrest Claypool, who recently resigned from the school district he has led since 2015.

Jackson is a graduate of the school system and began her career as a history teacher in a district high school. She has also served as a principal of two small Chicago high schools she helped create.

As CEO, she said she will focus on academic progress, stabilizing district finances and improving the integrity and public trust of the Chicago Public Schools.

"But no role in CPS better prepares me than being a CPS parent," said Jackson in the *Chicago Sun Times*, whose daughter attends a school in the district. "Know that in the CEO you have somebody who has experienced the district, and owes all of my success to CPS, but I look at it through the lens of a parent."

## NYC Leader Leaving

In 2014, Carmen Fariña came out of retirement at the age of 70 to become chancellor of the New York City Department

**Books, Barbers** continued from page 2

lack the confidence to read aloud and that because of peer pressure many students are afraid to let people know that they're intelligent.

But the barbershop is the one place boys are provided with a sense of community, not competition.

"They come to the barbershop, and we not only cut your hair, but we're here to help you, too," said Foggie in an interview with the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

of Education and lead the nation's largest school district, with 1.1 million students in more than 1,800 schools.

The veteran educator recently announced that she plans to retire from the district after serving for four years.

During her tenure, she has seen the expansion of universal pre-kindergarten to more than 53,000 4-year-olds, an expanded Community School model to provide more services to students and families, and increased funding for arts education and after-school programs for middle students. And under her leadership, test scores and graduation rates for students increased.



**Carmen Fariña**

The daughter of Spanish immigrants and the first in her family to graduate college, Fariña began her career as a classroom teacher at an elementary school in New York City specializing in social studies. In her five decades with the district, she has served in various positions, including principal, district superintendent and deputy chancellor for teaching and learning.

In a letter announcing her retirement, Fariña recalled that when New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio asked her to become the chancellor four years ago she accepted because of her faith in the promise of public education to level the playing field and give every child opportunities regardless of home zip code. "I took the job with a firm belief in excellence for every student, in the dignity and joyfulness of the teaching profession, and in the importance of trusting relationships where collaboration is the driving force," Fariña wrote. "These are the beliefs that I have built over five decades as a New York City educator and they have been at the heart of the work we have done together for the past four years."

## L.A. Leader to Retire

Also announcing retirement is Michelle King, the superintendent of the Los An-

geles Unified School District. A graduate of the school district, King has led the 588,696-student school system since 2016.

King, who is undergoing treatment for cancer, will retire at the end of June. Vivian



**Michelle King**

Ekchian, the district's associate superintendent overseeing human resources and the office of parent and community services, is currently serving as acting superintendent.

Under King's leadership, graduation rates have risen and in an effort to improve communication throughout the district, she has created interactive Listen and Learn Tours to connect with students, parents and community leaders.

Last year, the National Association of School Superintendents selected King as its 2017 National Superintendent of the Year, and in June the board of education gave her a two-year contract extension to serve until 2020.

King has a 30-year career with the Los Angeles school system, having served as a teacher, principal, chief of staff to the superintendent, senior deputy superintendent and chief deputy superintendent.

## New Leader in Richmond

Virginia's Richmond Public Schools recently named an administrator from the nation's capital to lead its school system. Jason Kamras, was named the superintendent of the 24,000-student school district, succeeding interim superintendent Thomas Kranz.

Kamras has held various positions in the District of Columbia Public Schools, in-



**Jason Kamras**

**At the Helm** continued on page 11



## Several Urban School Teachers Named 2018 State Teachers of the Year

Vanessa Ching, a teacher at Ewa Makai Middle School in Hawaii, is the coordinator of the school's student activities and green initiatives where she has led her school in reducing its carbon footprint. Her school would go on to be the only one

statewide to win the National Green Ribbon School certification presented by the U.S. Department of Education.

In recognition of her efforts, Ching was selected as the 2018 Hawaii State Teacher of the Year.

**Des Moines** continued from page 1

After crossing the border, she was apprehended by immigration officials and spent the night in a cold detention center. The next day Galdames, who spoke no English, was moved for a week to a cell with 300 people before a lawyer was able to get her out, and she took a bus to Iowa to be reunited with her mother.

She lived with her mother, stepfather and 8-year-old sister in Iowa, with the family moving three times in three years to avoid detection by immigration officials.

In October, her parents were arrested when they were dropping her sister off at school. Her stepfather was eventually deported to Mexico, where he is from, and her mother decided to voluntarily return to Guatemala along with her youngest daughter, who is a United States citizen.

However, Galdames had applied to obtain legal status and was only a year and half from graduating from high school. So her mother decided she would stay in the United States and made arrangements for her to live with a relative in New Jersey she had never met.

### Providing a Home

When Galdames' stepfather was arrested, Ahart's wife Jami Bassman, a real estate agent and an actress, became friends with her mother and got to know Jennifer.

One day while Jami was visiting the Galdames' to bring them supplies for the teen to take with her to New Jersey, her mother told her that Jennifer did not want to leave Des Moines. After discussing the situation, the Aharts decided that the teen would live with them and they would be-

come her temporary legal guardians.

"We understood the situation that her mother, stepfather, and little sister were in and what their hopes for Jennifer were," said Ahart in an email to the *Urban Educator*. "We were in a position to offer support and felt strongly that we could provide genuine help to both Jennifer and her family if we took this step."

The 17-year-old was nervous the first week living with the Aharts, but has settled in nicely with the family describing them in the *Des Moines Register* "as fun, lovely people. We play games, watch football."

The Aharts call Galdames their daughter and she has bonded with Eli, Jami's 6-year-old son.

She plays basketball, and after graduating from high school wants to attend college. But she is waiting approval of her permanent residence status, so her post-secondary options are limited and she is not covered under the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program. And due to an extreme backlog of cases in the nation's immigration court system, the Aharts lawyer estimates that it may take a year and a half or longer for Galdames to obtain legal status.

Superintendent Ahart has led the Des Moines school system since 2013, and said that taking Galdames in has given him a different lens to gauge the district's cultural proficiency work, as well as a greater understanding of the experiences his students face.

"And of course, it has deepened my commitment to our students and families that are in most need of advocacy and can really only find reliable support for a number of critical life needs through their school."

Every year, outstanding teachers from each state and the District of Columbia are selected as State Teachers of the Year, and this year several big-city educators were named the best by their states through the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The 2018 Alaska Teacher of the Year was Ben Walker, who has spent his 11-year career at Romig Middle School in the Anchorage School District, where he teaches science, as well as applied technology, robotics and media technology. And outside of the classroom, he is committed to organizing STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) Career Day events, MathCOUNTS programs and a social and emotional learning committee.

Matthew Bacon-Brenes, a Japanese immersion teacher at Mt. Tabor Middle School in Portland Public Schools, has been named Oregon's 2018 Teacher of the Year.

Bacon-Brenes' has made his greatest impact as a teacher in the Portland school district's Japanese immersion K-12 program he has led for the past 20 years. He facilitates an annual, two-week Japanese Research Residency trip for 8th-grade students, where they research themes around Japanese culture, history, and social science.

Paul Howard, a social studies teacher at LaSalle-Backus Education Campus in Washington, D.C., was named 2018 D.C.

**State Teachers** continued on page 10



2018 Hawaii State Teacher of the Year Vanessa Ching, right, of Ewa Makai Middle School reacts to the announcement of her selection. Photo credit: Hawaii State Department of Education

## Toledo School District Consolidates Career Tech Programs In Aviation and Natural Science

Ohio's Toledo Public Schools plans to open a new academy next school year without reinventing the wheel.

Instead, the district is combining two successful Career Tech programs – The Aviation Center and the Natural Science Technology Center – and adding core academic subjects for students to take in a renovated building at the Toledo Express Airport.

Plans are in the works to offer a Career Tech honors diploma, but the main impetus behind the creation of the new Aerospace and Natural Science Academy of Toledo is to train students to be college- and career-ready for jobs in the growing fields of aviation and environmental science, sustainability and wildlife management.

The aviation industry, for example, anticipates a shortage of more than 113,000 aviation technicians over the next 15 years, according to the district.

And on the environmental front, Superintendent Romulus Durant of Toledo Public Schools notes, “Every year in August and September in northwest Ohio, we talk about the algal bloom. The kids in this school very well may be coming up with the solution to that issue.”

The current Aviation Center is a three-year program that prepares students to become FAA-certified maintenance technicians, and provides them with hands-on experience in a hangar located at the airport. They, and their counterparts at the Natural Science Technology Center, have split schedules – they travel to their home high schools for core classes and then travel again to their respective centers for individualized training and then back on the bus to their home schools for dismissal.

### Port Authority Involved

“This new academy, which includes core curriculum courses, will allow the Aviation Center students to spend their entire school day at the airport, eliminating long

travel times during the day,” says Paul Toth, president and chief executive officer of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority. He adds the Port Authority is proud to partner with the Toledo school system on this project. And the Natural Science Technology Center students will have the time they travel cut down considerably.

The new school will be housed in a 33,138-square-foot facility previously used to house simulators for flight training. The district has budgeted more than \$4.6 million for renovations. This includes more than \$1.6 million in building improvements, including such items as re-roofing and HVAC that would typically be the responsibility of the Port Authority, the building's owner. In addition to paying for the improvements, the district's 10-year lease deal includes zero rent for the first six years.

District officials are still finalizing staffing needs so there is not an overall operating cost at this point, but recruitment has started to enroll 300 students in grades 9–12. The academy is a true magnet school, with Toledo Public Schools administrators hoping to attract students from throughout northwest Ohio.

In addition to core subjects such as English, math and science, students will learn such necessary job skills as team-building, problem-solving and innovation. Teachers will attend professional development sessions at the start of each school year so they are current on the latest industry practices.

Recruitment shouldn't be a problem, if Start High School sophomore Faith



Students receive instruction at the current Toledo Aviation Center.

Brown is any indication. She had known she wanted to pursue some type of mechanical career but honed in on aviation after a trip to the current center.

“I didn't know I could be working on airplanes,” she told the *Toledo Blade* the day of the announcement. “When I came here in eighth grade, I was like, ‘... this is what I want to do.’”

### Pathway to College

The Port Authority is not the only Toledo-area organization supporting the creation of the new academy. Both Bowling Green State University and Owens Community College have pledged academic support. Students who enroll in the College Credit Plus program while at the academy can earn an associate degree through Owens and then can transfer to Bowling Green to earn a bachelor's degree only two years out of high school.

Bowling Green President Mary Ellen Mazey says she is most proud that the collaboration is designed to help students continue their education without leaving northwest Ohio.

“The students will have opportunities to pursue coursework that will lead to degrees

*Toledo District continued on page 11*

**Puerto Rican** *continued from page 1*

"There was no light, no water, no gas," said Rodriguez, who was interviewed for a story that appeared on the Cleveland Metropolitan School District News Bureau website. "... The situation we were in was not livable."

It was those conditions that forced Rodriguez and her daughter to leave Puerto Rico and journey to the United States, along with her friend Keishla Marie Marichal Delpilar and her two children.

For Delpilar, it was especially urgent she leave the island because her 4-year-old daughter has a heart condition and takes medication that must be kept cold. But the hurricane knocked out electricity in their entire town, which meant that her daughter's medicine went bad and she was forced to go without it for weeks.

In October, the two families flew to Cleveland, where Delpilar's two brothers live, and enrolled their children in Cleveland's Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy. The PreK-12 school is home to the district's immigrants and refugees and where Puerto Rican families like Delpilar and Rodriguez have been showing up since Hurricane Maria as well as Hurricane Irma landed on the island.

Currently, there are more than 120 Puerto Rican students displaced by the hurricanes attending Cleveland schools. According to Senaida Perez, the district's family engagement and student officer, many of the students have come with almost nothing, other than the clothes on their backs and what they can fit into a bag. The district has provided donated uniforms and a set of school supplies for each newcomer when they're enrolled.

Perez is part of a team that has been helping families from Puerto Rico register their children for school and referring them to providers for healthcare, housing and jobs.

She also connects students and their families with mental health services, having seen firsthand the trauma that displaced families have brought with them. One girl, apparently afraid of a shortage of



**Tenisha Marie Bennett Rodriguez, left, and Keishla Marie Marichal Delpilar enroll their children in Cleveland's Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy after leaving Puerto Rico due to Hurricane Maria.**

water, has been carrying around the same full, unopened water bottle since her first day of school, while another child's mother reported that her son began harming himself after the move.

"My job is to get parents engaged with their child's school," said Perez, "but right now, I'm focusing on helping them meet their basic needs."

After all they endured, Delpilar and Rodriguez, who are living together with their children in a one-bedroom apartment and looking for employment, are adjusting to their new environment and working to get back on their feet.

"I'm grateful to be here and just trying to live one day at a time," said Rodriguez. And Delpilar, whose daughter is seeing a cardiologist, said that "everyone in Cleveland is so nice. It's just a little cold."

### **Other Districts Step Up**

Several big-city school districts across the nation are also helping integrate students from hurricane-affected areas.

Florida's Orange County Public Schools in Orlando has welcomed 2,747 students from Puerto Rico and 318 students from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The OCPS Foundation continues to collect items and funds for students and families needing assistance, with arriving students receiving welcome kits including items such as non-perishable food, clothing, and gift cards for groceries and house-

hold goods.

In addition to aiding displaced students, the district has encouraged adults who have left Puerto Rico to seek employment in the school system. So far, its human resources department has hired 50 teachers and 27 classified staff members from the island.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has enrolled 647 students from Puerto Rico and has been in conversations with Puerto Rico's Department of Education about the alignment of standards and curriculum to ensure a smooth student transition. District officials have also reached out to members of Congress to secure additional federal funding to accommodate displaced students.

New York's Rochester City School District has enrolled 482 new students from Puerto Rico and recently opened a grade 1-12 Bilingual Language and Literacy Academy for them. In addition to providing students with bilingual teachers, who will offer instruction in English and Spanish, the school is incorporating social-emotion supports through a bilingual social worker and a bilingual home school assistant.

Buffalo Public Schools in New York has received 418 students from Puerto Rico, with many students registering in one of the district's four bilingual elementary schools, including Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy.

The school of 800 has seen an influx of new students, and enrollment has increased 15 percent with an additional 100 students since families from Puerto began arriving in October. School administrators are dealing with the challenge of enrolling extra students, sometimes seeing four or five new families a day.

"It's 100-plus kids—and the same amount of teachers, the same amount of rooms," said school social worker Jennifer Jalil-Contreras in an article that recently appeared in the *Buffalo News*. "But," said Jalil-Contreras, who helps the students and their families get the support they need, "it's been great to be here and help them. And the teachers are very welcoming."



## Dallas to Shelter Homeless High Schoolers

It is estimated that more than 3,500 students who attend the Dallas Independent School District are homeless, and there are at least 112 high schoolers in the district who live unaccompanied, in a car, park, campground or abandoned building.

In an effort to combat this problem, the nation's 14th largest school district has launched a first-of-its-kind program aimed at reducing the number of homeless high school students.

After8toEducate is a new initiative created through a partnership between the Dallas school system and several local non-profit organizations.

Under the program, the district will repurpose a vacant elementary school to shelter 35 high school students and provide them with academic, emotional, and social service support, as well as offer tutoring and job training.

The renovated school will not only benefit those 35 students living there, but serve as a 24/7 drop-in center for Dallas youth between 14–21 years of age, and provide meals, showers, clothing and laundry services.

According to the *Dallas Morning News*, the district will pay no more than \$135,000 a year to the After8toEducate effort, granting the use of the building, and paying for utilities, custodial help and security for a seven-year period, with two possible five-year extensions. The nonprofit organizations will raise approximately \$2 million to renovate the school and then raise \$2 million yearly for services at the shelter.

The initiative was unanimously approved by the district's board of trustees. "Dallas ISD is proud to be the first school district in the nation to directly partner with agencies providing shelter, education and other support services, in addition to a 24/7 drop-in facility," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa. "Offering these services under one roof, with our partners, will make a vast improvement in the lives of a growing number of unsheltered youth in our school district."

The shelter will open in the fall of the 2018–2019 school year.

## Austin District Gets \$4.5 Million For Mental Health Services

Crime can lead to extreme mental trauma, especially in the youngest of students. In Texas' Austin Independent School District, 22 elementary schools have been identified as located in areas with high child maltreatment due to factors that include elevated neighborhood crime. This trauma can be a strong deterrent to student achievement.

As a result, all 22 elementary schools will be able to benefit from a \$4.5-million grant that will place mental health services directly on each campus. These mental health centers are dedicated to serving both students and their families experiencing emotional stress.

The grant comes from the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor in Texas, and Austin is the first school district to receive funding from this source.

"This grant will help ensure that these young students' lives are not defined by the crimes they have experienced, but with the right help to move on to be happy and productive," said Texas Gov. Greg Abbott.

Each participating school will have two staff members on campus devoted to providing immediate therapeutic services. "By providing mental health services on campus, we are able to identify, support, and efficiently provide clinical treatment for our students experiencing a variety of mental health issues," said Tracy Spinner, assistant director of comprehensive health services for the district.

Austin has been recognized nationally for its work on mental health issues, with the district creating its first mental health center pilot in 2011, which has expanded to 18 middle and high schools.

## 3 Urban School Chiefs Tops in Their States



Michael Grego

In 2012, Michael Grego was named the superintendent of Florida's Pinellas County Schools, which includes St. Petersburg. Under his leadership, the graduation rate has climbed to 80.1 percent, the highest in school district history.

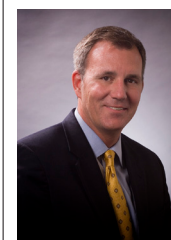
And since 2013, the district has experienced a 40.9 percent increase in the number of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken and a 42.5 percent increase in the number of AP exams with a score of 3 or higher.

As a result of these efforts, Grego was chosen as Florida's 2018 Superintendent of the Year. Grego was one of three big-city superintendents named 2018 State Superintendent of the Year in their respective states by AASA, the School Superintendents Association.



Pat Skorkowsky

Pat Skorkowsky, the superintendent of the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, was named Nevada's 2018 Superintendent of the Year. He has led the nation's fifth largest school district since 2013. During his tenure, the district has opened 12 new magnet programs, and last year he was named Magnet Superintendent of the Year by Magnet Schools of America.



John Allison

John Allison was named Kansas' 2018 Superintendent of the Year. Allison, who is the current superintendent of Kansas' Olathe Public Schools, served as superintendent in the Wichita Public Schools from 2000 to 2017. As superintendent, he helped the district lead the implementation of systemic reforms that focused on developing and improving students' literacy skills.

## College Board Announces Annual AP Honor Roll

For the first time in its history, the Houston Independent School District has made the College Board's AP District Honor Roll list.

This year's 8th annual list consists of 447 school districts across the United States and Canada that have increased access to Advanced Placement courses for under-represented students, while maintaining or improving the rate at which their AP students earned scores of 3 or higher on an AP exam.

The Houston school system, the largest school district in Texas, has more than doubled that number since 2007.

Inclusion in the 8th Annual AP District Honor Roll is based on a review of three years of AP data, from 2015 to 2017,

across 37 AP exams. In order to make the Honor Roll, large school districts had to: increase participation and access to AP by at least 4 percent; increase or maintain the percentage of minority groups taking and scoring high on an AP Exam; and improve performance levels when comparing the percentage of students in 2017 scoring a 3 or higher to those students in 2015.

"I am very proud of our students and staff for achieving this distinction," said Houston Schools Superintendent Richard Carranza in a press release.

Other urban school districts on the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual AP District Honor Roll are Chicago Public Schools, Denver Public Schools and California's Santa Ana Unified School District.

## Career Opportunities Expand for Toledo Students

Partnerships have been launched with the City of Toledo and a community college to expand career opportunities for students in Ohio's Toledo Public Schools.

The first cohort of 14 high-school seniors is attending Owens Community College this spring semester to pursue studies in becoming emergency medical technicians (EMTs). And a new internship program with the city government will give students an opportunity to work in several departments.

When speaking to the first cohort of students that will go through the EMT training, Toledo Public Schools Superintendent Romules Durant said, "Once you complete the program, you will be certified, and you can truly say, 'I am career-ready because I have a certification that allows me to be employed ... as a basic EMT.'"

Students are learning how to assess and transport patients and determine emergency situations through the Owens program and they will take non-EMT classes twice a week on the Owens campus to ensure they can fulfill their high-school graduation requirements. Tuition and fees will be covered through the district's College

Credit Plus program.

An increase in the middle-aged and elderly populations most likely will lead to more age-related health emergencies, so the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the EMT field will grow by 24 percent from 2014 to 2024.

In the internship program, the Toledo Public Schools, the city and AFSCME Local 7 have launched the Co-Op Initiative, which is starting in January. It will allow 18 high school juniors and seniors to learn resume writing, interview skills and other soft skills before beginning their six-week internships in June.

The students will be placed in departments like Public Services and Public Utilities, in such jobs as utility workers, clerical specialists and service repair workers.

Toledo Public Schools Superintendent Durant is thrilled about the internship possibilities.

"Hands-on learning experiences such as these internships are invaluable opportunities for students," he stressed. "The guidance they will receive by working with professionals within the City of Toledo will give them an advantage in the workforce."

## Teachers Named Finalists for \$1 Million Global Prize



**Melissa Collins**

Melissa Collins, a teacher at John P. Freeman Optional School in Memphis, has championed the importance of science, technology, engineering and math, and has implemented a STEM club at her school where students receive hands-on training and interact with STEM professionals. A National Board Certified Teacher, she is the recipient of several awards, including the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching and the Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education presented by the Council of the Great City Schools in 2015.



**Glen Lee**

Glen Lee left a career as an electrical engineer to become a STEM teacher at a school in Hawaii. In 1999, he launched the state's first robotics program and now there are more than 750 robotic programs in grades K-12. The robotics program he leads at Waiialua High & Intermediate School serves as a model for engaging students in STEM subjects and the skills necessary for graduates to succeed in college and careers.

Collins and Lee are two of the 50 finalists selected from 30,000 nominees from around the world to compete for the \$1 million Varkey Foundation's 2018 Global Teacher Prize. Established in 2013, the prize recognizes an exemplary teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession and aims to shine a spotlight on the important role teachers play in society.

There were only five teachers from the United States chosen as finalists and four of those teachers come from school dis-

**Global Prize** continued on page 9





## Council of the Great City Schools

### ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE/POLICY CONFERENCE

**March 17-20, 2018**

The Mayflower Hotel • Washington, DC



#### **Saturday, March 17**

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

#### **Sunday, March 18**

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

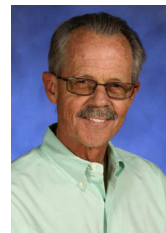
#### **Monday, March 19**

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

#### **Tuesday, March 20**

Breakfast and Briefing  
Adjourn

**Global Prize** *continued from page 8*



**Joseph Underwood**

tricts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

In addition to Collins and Lee, the finalists include Joseph Underwood, a television production teacher at Miami Senior High. His students produce approximately 165 live shows each year and many of his former students now work in the highest levels of the entertainment technologies industry. In 2007, he was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame



**Melinda Wilson**

Melinda Wilson is a teacher at Curie Metropolitan High School for the Performing & Technical Arts in Chicago. She is also the dance director at an afterschool program where students from Chicago Public Schools can take dance. Within one year, the program has tripled in size.

Akash Patel is a Spanish teacher at Thomas J. Rusk Middle School in Dallas, where 100 percent of the students come



**Akash Patel**

from economically disadvantaged families.

Patel has connected all of his classrooms with people and professionals worldwide using virtual platforms such as Adobe Connect, Skype and Google Hangout. He has mobilized more than 1,000 volunteers from more than 150 countries to join his Global Connect database at the World Experiences Foundation, a charitable organization he founded. And he has trained more than 5,000 teachers to use the Global Connect database and frequently speaks at local and national conferences about his classroom experiences.

The Global Teacher Prize winner will be announced at the Global Education and Skills forum this March in Dubai.

## Congressional Delays Leave Everyone Waiting

By Manish Naik, *Manager of Legislative Services*

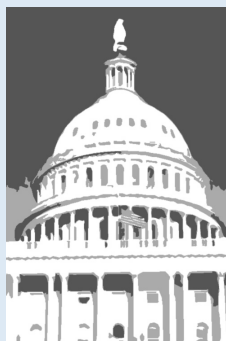
On January 22, the House and Senate passed another short-term Continuing Resolution (CR), a temporary funding measure that ended a three-day federal government shutdown. This latest CR was the fourth extension approved by Congress since the federal fiscal year began on October 1, 2017, and delayed decisions on FY 2018 spending and other major issues for approximately three weeks.

The government shutdown began when Senate Democrats refused to support a CR that did not include a fix for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration program. DACA allows undocumented immigrants brought here as children – a group often referred to as Dreamers – the temporary right to live, study, and work in the United States.

The President announced last year that DACA would end in March 2018, giving Congress six months to pass legislation that would give Dreamers a path to temporary or permanent legal immigration status.

Although there were over a dozen Democratic “NO” votes, most Senate Democrats agreed to end the government shutdown after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell promised consideration of DACA legislation at some point in the coming weeks.

Multiple bills addressing the legal status of the Dreamers have been introduced by Democrats and Republicans in the 115th Congress, including bipartisan legislation that would



create ways for eligible Dreamers to apply for citizenship. The timing of any DACA consideration in the Senate remains unclear, however, and the lack of specificity adds to the Dreamers’ anxiety as the March deadline nears.

The latest CR includes a six-year renewal of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which expired last September and was left unauthorized for almost four months. But many pressing issues remain unresolved in addition to those dealing with the Dreamers, including emergency disaster funding for hurricane and wildfire recovery, and a looming breach of the federal debt ceiling.

The two parties also continue to disagree on the underlying issue of how to split defense and domestic discretionary appropriations for the current fiscal year—a critical precursor to finalizing program funding levels in an FY 2018 spending bill.

For most school districts, the major financial impact of these protracted battles is the delay in knowing the final funding levels for education programs, requiring a postponement of budgeting decisions for school year 2018-19 until more information is available.

Congressional negotiations are ongoing, but a lack of progress before the latest CR expires on February 8th could result in yet another extension or government shutdown, leaving everyone waiting even longer.

**State Teachers** *continued from page 4*

Teacher of the Year.

Howard has been teaching for six years and in 2007 was named the District of Columbia History Teacher of the Year.

Cicely Woodard, an 8th-grade math teacher at West End Middle School in

Nashville, was named the Tennessee 2018 Teacher of the Year.

A 13-year veteran of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, Woodard was honored for her outstanding communication and leadership skills.

And Tara Bordeaux, an audio visual

production teacher at Lanier High School in Austin, TX, was selected as the 2018 Texas Teacher of the Year.

Bordeaux is a former high school dropout and prior to becoming a teacher, she spent 10 years working in television and film production in Los Angeles.



## Newark Grad Becomes Rhodes Scholar

Jordan Thomas, a 2014 graduate of University High School in Newark, N.J., is honored, alongside his parents, at a recent school board meeting for becoming the first graduate from the Newark school district to receive a Rhodes Scholarship. He is one of 32 American recipients of the fellowship, which funds two to three years of graduate study at the University of Oxford in England. Thomas held many roles as a student in the Newark school district, including serving as the student representative on the advisory board. He attends Princeton University, where he will earn a bachelor's degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in 2018.

## Atlanta District Partners With City To Launch Urban Design Curriculum

Atlanta Public Schools is partnering with the City of Atlanta to offer students an interactive social studies curriculum based on a new design plan for the city.

The new curriculum will be implemented as a six-week exploration into urban planning, the history of the city's designs and plans for Atlanta's future.

According to district officials, the partnership is the first time the school system and the city have joined forces to develop a curriculum such as this.

City officials teamed with educators in a collaborative writing camp to design the initiative, which will be integrated into the district's middle school social studies curriculum.

*The Atlanta City Design: Aspiring to the Beloved Community* is the anchor text for the urban planning unit of the new curriculum. The Atlanta City Design promotes sustainable design that incorporates the social, economic and environmental needs

of the city. Created by residents, visitors, and design professionals, the design is also intended to guide future decisions on ways the city can accommodate a much larger population.

The district's 8th graders will participate in learning modules this spring, with the modules culminating with each student completing a capstone project. And ninth grade students will be taught the curriculum beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Meria Carstarphen said in a news statement that the new curriculum will enable students to have a voice in the future design of their city.

"Eighth graders will have an amazing opportunity to guide our city toward becoming a 'Beloved Community' by experiencing the city from a new lens and sharing their visions and plans for the future design of Atlanta," said Carstarphen.

**At the Helm** *continued from page 3*

cluding launching the district's new Office of Equity, focused on closing the achievement gap. He has also served as chief of instructional practice and chief of human capital. In 2005, he was selected as the National Teacher of Year.

In a news statement, Richmond School Board Chair Dawn Page praised Kamras' two decades of experience in urban public education. "His nationally acclaimed work to attract, retain and develop outstanding teachers and principals...and his laser-like focus on equity make Mr. Kamras the perfect fit for Richmond Public Schools."

## Contract Extended

Raquel Reedy, the superintendent of New Mexico's Albuquerque Public Schools, was recently given a year-long contract extension. The Albuquerque Public Schools board of education voted to extend her contract through the 2019-20 school year, citing the increase of public trust in the district and the community's embrace of new Learning Zones designed to tailor and deliver instruction based on the individual needs of schools.

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

**Toledo District** *continued from page 5*

in aviation studies, engineering technology, environmental science and biology," she says. There will be a seamless pathway between the Aerospace and Natural Science Academy of Toledo and associate and bachelor's degree programs at the Firelands campus of BGSU and the school's College of Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering or the College of Arts and Sciences.

All of these plans will further Toledo Public Schools Superintendent Durant's ultimate goal: to have 90 percent or more of the district's Career Technology students secure a job, military assignment or higher education when they graduate from TPS.





Council of the Great City Schools  
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 1100N  
Washington DC 20004

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

---

---

## 2018 Council of the Great City Schools Conference Calendar

<b>Chief Human Resource Officers/ Chief Information Officers Joint Meeting</b>	February 6-9, 2018	Fort Lauderdale, FL
<b>Annual Legislative/Policy Conference</b>	March 17-20, 2018	Washington, DC
<b>Special Education Meeting of the Great City Schools</b>	March 20-21, 2018	Washington, DC
<b>Chief Operating Officers Conference</b>	April 17-20, 2018	Atlanta, GA
<b>Bilingual Directors Meeting</b>	May 15-19, 2018	Fort Worth, TX
<b>Curriculum &amp; Research Directors Joint Meeting</b>	June, 2018	Minneapolis, MN
<b>Public Relations Executives Meeting</b>	July 12-14, 2018	Garden Grove, CA
<b>62nd Annual Fall Conference</b>	October 24-28, 2018	Baltimore, MD
<b>Chief Financial Officers Conference</b>	November, 2018	TBD