



- New Leader in Nashville, p.3
- Call for Ethnic Studies, p.7
- LEGISLATIVE**
- ESSA Regulatory Process p.10

## School Districts Partner With Colleges in New Pell Grant Program

Students in Mississippi's Jackson Public Schools will be able to use federal Pell Grants to take courses at nearby Jackson State University, as a result of a new pilot program launched by the U.S. Department of Education.

The program, called the Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment, will enable more than 10,000 high school students across the nation for the first time ever to use approximately \$20 million in federal Pell Grants to fund dual enrollment courses at colleges and universities.

Jackson State University is one of 44 postsecondary institutions that will partner with their respective local school districts to participate in the initiative.

Under the program, high school students eligible to receive Pell Grants will

**Pell Grant** *continued on page 7*

## Miami Leader Receives Top Magnet School Award

Alberto Carvalho, the superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, was recently selected as the 2016 Magnet Schools of America Superintendent of the Year. Sponsored by the Magnet Schools of America (MSA), the award honors a superintendent's strong leadership skills in developing and supporting magnet schools

**Miami Leader** *continued on page 3*



Fresno student Oscar Rivera, right, works with his academic counselor Arthur Sulcer. Rivera walked 1,000 miles from his home in Honduras to the United States to seek a better life.

## Determined Fresno Student Graduates After 1,000-Mile Journey

When Oscar Rivera walked across the stage recently to accept his high school diploma from Edison High School in Fresno, Calif., it was the culmination of a 1,000-mile journey that began three years ago.

Rivera was born in Honduras, where he attended six years of elementary school and then went to work in the corn and bean fields. In 2009, his father was murdered while working in Florida to send money home to the family. Six months later, Rivera's mother left for the United States to work and he and his five sisters never heard from her again.

"We think that she passed away," said Rivera in an interview with Fresno's school district newsletter.

Rivera and his siblings had no money, so at the age of 13 he decided to walk to the United States to find work and send money home to support his family.

An uncle sent him \$100 for the trip, and Rivera began the journey by foot with a group of 20 people but soon winded up traveling alone.

The 13-year-old carried only a backpack with food, some clothes, a blanket

**Determined Student** *continued on page 5*

# Council Honors Young Math, Science Scholars

Four high school graduates of the Class of 2016 recently won ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships from the Council of the Great City Schools.

The young scholars were chosen from several hundred applicants across the nation for their academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

Now in its seventh year, the scholarship was created by former NASA astronaut Dr. Bernard Harris Jr., first African American to walk in space, and ExxonMobil to en-

courage and assist promising students of diverse backgrounds who plan to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies after high school.

The awards are given annually to African-American and Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 70 urban school districts represented by the Council. Each scholar receives \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field.

“These highly competitive scholarships give talented urban students a boost in their pursuit of postsecondary STEM studies and careers,” said Council Executive Direc-

tor Michael Casserly. “The generous support of Dr. Harris and ExxonMobil helps advance these young men and women as they begin the next stage of their lives.”

The 2016 scholarship winners are all from Florida urban school districts:

- Michael Benben, Western High School, Broward County Public Schools;

**Young Scholars** continued on page 3



Michael Benben



Francesca Dupuy



Eillen Martinez



Dalan Smallwood



**Council officers**

**Chair**

Felton Williams  
Board Member, Long Beach

**Chair-elect**

Kaya Henderson  
Chancellor, District of Columbia

**Secretary-Treasurer**

Lawrence Feldman  
Board Member, Miami-Dade

**Executive Director**

Michael Casserly  
mcasserly@cgcs.org

**Editor**

Henry Duvall  
hduvall@cgcs.org

**Associate Editor**

Tonya Harris  
tharris@cgcs.org

A newsletter published by the Council of the Great City Schools, representing 70 of the nation's largest urban public school districts.

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

All news items should be submitted to:  
Urban Educator

Council of the Great City Schools  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 702 • Washington, DC 20004  
(202) 393-2427 • (202) 393-2400 (fax)

Find the Council on:



# Nashville, Minneapolis, Anchorage and Pittsburgh Name New Leaders



**Shawn Joseph**

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools recently named Shawn Joseph as its new leader. Joseph becomes the first African American to head the 86,000-student school district.

Since 2014, he has served as the deputy superintendent for teaching and learning in Maryland's Prince George's County Public Schools, where he led efforts to improve academic achievement, increase family engagement and increase efficiency. Previously, he was the superintendent of Delaware's Seaford School District.

He succeeds the interim school chief, Chris Henson, who was the district's chief financial officer.

## New at the Helm

Also selecting a leader was Minneapolis Public Schools, which named Ed Graff as its new superintendent.



**Ed Graff**

Graff is the former superintendent of Alaska's Anchorage School District, which he led for three years. He will succeed interim superintendent Michael Goar.

And replacing Graff in Anchorage will be Deena Paramo, who was recently named the superintendent of Alaska's largest school system with 48,500 students.



**Deena Paramo**

Paramo is currently the superintendent of Alaska's Mat-Su Borough School District, which she has led for five years, and also serves on the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

And Pittsburgh Public Schools has selected Anthony Hamlet as its next superintendent to lead the 25,000-student school district, succeed-



**Anthony Hamlet**

ing Linda Lane who served as superintendent since 2010.

Hamlet is an administrator with Florida's School District of Palm Beach County, where he has served as the director of recruitment and retention as well as the director of school accountability transformation, overseeing 25 low-performing schools.

His appointment is now under review.

## Miami Leader continued from page 1

and programs in their respective school districts.

Under Carvalho's tenure, which began in 2008, the Miami school system has launched more than 109 new magnet



**Alberto Carvalho**

programs and has expanded the number of magnet school offerings in the nation's fourth largest school district to 375.

Carvalho was not the only Miami official to be honored. Martin Reid, principal from the district's Arthur and Polly Mays Conservatory of the Arts, was named the National Magnet School Principal of the Year. Under Reid's leadership, the school has transformed from a D-graded middle school by the state of Florida into a 6th-to 12th-grade conservatory, which graduated its first class in 2015 with above-average graduation rates.

Another big-city educator to receive an award from MSA was Matthew Wayne, a teacher at the LAUSD/USC Cinematic Arts and Engineering Magnet in Los Angeles. He was named the 2016 National Magnet School Teacher of the Year.

## Young Scholars continued from page 2

- Francesca Rafaella Dupuy, Cooper City High School, Broward County Public Schools;
- Eillen Daniela Martinez, Timber Creek High School, Orange County Public Schools; and
- Dalan Omar Smallwood, Strawberry Crest High School, Hillsborough County Public Schools.

In the fall, Benben plans to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology and aspires to major in mechanical engineering. Dupuy will be studying environmental engineering at the University of Florida.

Martinez hopes to become a doctor and will attend Johns Hopkins University, while Smallwood, who will study biophysics and also has aspirations to be a physician, will attend the University of North Carolina.

"Reading the achievements and aspirations of these young people is truly inspirational," said Dr. Harris, a physician and businessman. "It's my hope that the scholarships they receive will propel them to a future of fulfilling their dreams."

Administration of the scholarship program, including the application process, pre-selection and presentation of awards, is provided by the Council. Dr. Harris makes the final selection of recipients.



## Dallas Graduate Aims To Be District's Youngest Teacher

Melisa Simon, a 17-year-old senior, recently graduated from Samuell High School in Dallas, and if all goes well, she will be back in Dallas, not as a student, but as a teacher.

Simon is on track to become the school district's youngest teacher at the age of 19, as a result of her participation in Samuell's early college program. She received her associate's degree from Eastfield College that will enable her to enroll in TechTeach, a program at Texas Tech University that will allow her to obtain a bachelor's degree and teacher certification in one year.

Participants who finish the program must work at a Dallas school for at least two years.

Simon will turn 19 when she starts her teaching career as a bilingual elementary teacher in August 2017. According to Dallas school officials, the youngest person to teach in the school district was 20.

Becoming a teacher will be a dream come true for Simon, who is an undocumented immigrant who crossed the border from Mexico with her family at the age of 3.

Simon believes that her life story can help overcome the negative stereotypes that people have of illegal immigrants.

"I'm proud that I'm achieving all of this because I can prove people wrong and I can be an example," she said in an interview with the *Dallas Morning News*.



Melisa Simon holds her high school and college books. Photo credit: *Dallas Morning News*



## Two Orlando Students Make History

At Evans High School in Orlando, Fla., where 100 percent of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, it has been 50 years since a student from the school has been accepted to the United States Military Academy at West Point. But this year, not one but two students from Evans have been accepted: Quinton Cooper and Joseph Simmons.

Acceptance into West Point is highly selective, with only a 7 percent acceptance rate.

"Seven percent is a scary number because it's so small," said Cooper in an interview with *News 6*. "That's what limits the minds of any student who comes from an urban school like Evans."

The two students share a strong friendship and have motivated each other as

members of the school's International Baccalaureate and ROTC programs. They are now considered trailblazers and role models, with other students eager to follow in their footsteps.

"I have about five kids right now saying, 'we are going to be the next Cooper and Simmons,'" Capt. Brian Beasley, an ROTC instructor at Evans, told *News 6*.

At West Point, Simmons will major in chemistry and hopes to become a bio-



Joseph Simmons and Quinton Cooper

logical nuclear chemical officer in the U.S. Army.

And Cooper was not only accepted to West Point but also to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., which he will attend and major in physics or nuclear engineering with the goal of eventually becoming a submarine warfare officer.

## Charlotte Student Overcomes Obstacles

Caroline Aufgebauer was diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss at birth and has worn hearing aids all of her life. But the 2016 graduate of Providence High School in Charlotte, N.C., did not let that stop her from becoming an award-winner on the National Spanish examinations.

Aufgebauer won a bronze on the National Spanish Exam, the toughest language competition in the nation.



Caroline Aufgebauer

**Charlotte Student** continued on page 6

## Omaha Student Doesn't Let Disability Deter Him

Dominique McDaniel, a 2016 graduate of Omaha Public Schools, wants to become an adolescent counselor for at-risk youth and help end the cycle of gangs and violence affecting the Omaha community.

The desire to heal his community is deeply personal for McDaniel, who in 2013 was shot several times. At the time he was 17 and finally getting his life on track after living in and out of detention centers and group homes and dropping out of school. Right before the shooting, McDaniel had reenrolled in school and joined his school's basketball team. But after being shot, doctors told him he would never walk again.

McDaniel could've given up but he fought to learn how to care for himself. After the shooting, he was admitted into a rehabilitation facility where he had to relearn basic tasks such as showering and entering and exiting vehicles as well as strengthening his body to maneuver his wheelchair.



Dominique McDaniel proudly displays his high school diploma.

During this time, McDaniel became a student at Omaha's Accelerate program, which helps older students who might not succeed in traditional schools attain a high school diploma. The school became a lifesaver for him by offering the support system he needed to get his education, while dealing with his disability. And at the age of 21, he received his diploma, serving as the class speaker of his graduating class.

"I'm very proud of Dominique; this has been a journey for him that he has stuck with," said Shari Koch, Accelerate program director, in the *Omaha World Herald*. "...I'm very excited to see what this absolutely brilliant young man is going to do in the future."

That future will include undergoing surgery this summer and then becoming a full-time student at Nebraska's Metropolitan Community College, which he will attend after receiving a scholarship from the Susan Buffet Foundation.

### Determined Student *continued from page 1*

and a small knife for protection. He slept at night on the ground, often hearing wild animals.

It took him two months to walk 1,000 miles to Texas, where he was placed by the border patrol in a camp for Honduran refugees. After 29 days in the camp, a relative paid his airfare to Fresno where he stayed with an uncle.

Rivera worked in the fields for nine months before immigration officials told him he would be deported unless he went to school. He was placed in a foster home and began attending Edison High School.

He arrived at Edison in 2014 with zero credits and unable to speak English, but

took English immersion classes and extra courses, including three hours of physical science at night four days a week. He completed the graduation requirements in just two years, achieving a 3.5 grade-point average.

Rivera plans to attend Fresno City College as part of the Promise Scholars program for students in foster care.

His ultimate goal is to become a United States citizen and get a job as a California Highway Patrol officer.

Edison academic counselor Arthur Sulcer believes he will achieve his goal. "To have a kid who has gone through what he has, walked all that way, I think he can do anything he puts his mind to."

## Dayton Student Beats the Odds

Life has not been easy for Ebi Reyes Leiva, a recent graduate of Stivers School for the Arts in Dayton, Ohio. When she was 8, she left Costa Rica with her mother, who was escaping abuse and came to America. It was hard for her mother to find stable employment, so Leiva often lived out of a suitcase, attending 13 different schools and frequently going hungry.

And in the ninth grade, she was in and out of the hospital with celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder.

But through it all, she persevered and was named the valedictorian of her senior class. At Stivers, she compiled more than 300 hours of community service, served as vice president of the Junior Council on World Affairs, competed on academic teams and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Leiva recently was named a recipient of the Ohio chapter of the Children's Defense Fund Beat the Odds Award, which honored five seniors for overcoming adversity to excel academically. As a recipient, she received a \$5,000 college scholarship.

Leiva, who is attending Sinclair Community College, is grateful for the scholarship since she is unable to receive federal grants because she is in the country under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which provides people who were brought to the U.S. unlawfully as children a right to stay.

"It opens a world of possibilities for me," said Leiva, in an interview with the *Dayton Daily News*. "Every year we are here is a privilege."



Ebi Reyes Leiva



## Cleveland Transgender Student Finds Support

When Arianna Edge was a freshman at Cleveland's Facing History New Tech School (FHNT), she spent most of her time in a quiet, dark room suffering from extreme headaches and anxiety.

Four years later, Arianna is now Skyler, a transgender student who is a nationally known screenwriter and was even named by *Cleveland Magazine* as one of the city's most interesting people. And the headaches and anxiety are no longer a part of his life.

FHNT, which was created in 2012, encourages students to study racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism and bills itself as a safe space for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) students.

It was at FHNT where Edge found a supportive academic and social community, so supportive that when he was a sophomore, he came out as transgender in front of his history class and found acceptance from his fellow students.

The support he received encouraged

him to write a short story about a transgender teen that was submitted as an entry to a film competition. The story was one of three selected from more than 650 entries and was turned into a short movie that premiered at the 2015 Cleveland International Film Festival and appeared on the cable network Showtime.

In the fall, Edge will head to Eastern Michigan University, majoring in creative writing with a minor in gender and sexuality studies. And one of his biggest concerns about attending college will be alleviated, because the university has gender inclusive housing, which means he will be able to room with another boy for all four years and stay in the

Spectrum housing community, an LGBT-centered group in one of the dorms.

"Skyler's graduation is one of the 'special' ones," said principal Marc Engoglia in an email to the *Urban Educator*. "A student that truly has transformed."



Skyler Edge, left, receives his high school diploma from his school principal Marc Engoglia.

## L.A. Twins Headed to Yale Together

Arthur and Artin Kasumyan are twins in the Los Angeles Unified School District who have been together in every class, except for sixth and seventh grades. And they will continue to be together this fall when they both attend Yale University.

The twins recently graduated at the top of their class at Verdugo Hills High School—with Artin as the valedictorian and Arthur being tied for salutatorian.

In addition to excelling in academics, the twins were members of their school's

basketball and volleyball teams and started the school's Armenian Club, which now has more than 100 members.



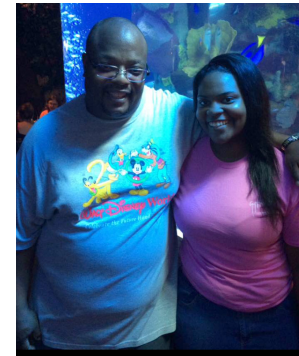
Twins Arthur and Artin Kasumyan

"They are very hard working," said Elva Guevara-Lewis, their Advanced Placement statistics teacher. "They put themselves out there and challenge themselves and the people in the classroom."

At Yale, Artin will major in computer science, while Arthur plans to major in mechanical engineering. They also plan to start an Armenian club.

## Jacksonville Student Overcomes Grief

The sinking of the El Faro cargo ship in the waters of the Bahamas during Hurricane Joaquin with 33 crew members aboard



Desiree Hamm, right, with her father Frank Hamm III

made national news last October.

And while for most people, the sinking was just a news story, it was far more personal for Desiree

Hamm, a student at Robert E. Lee High school in Jacksonville, Fla.

Hamm's father, Frank Hamm III, was a merchant seaman on the El Faro when it sank. Hamm can still recall when her mother told her and her siblings the news and the heartbreak she felt when she realized he was gone forever.

But she did not let her father's death deter her from succeeding in school, graduating with a 3.3 grade-point average, while serving as senior class vice president and playing on the volleyball team.

Hamm has been accepted at Florida Atlantic University and Florida State College of Jacksonville and is determined to use the memory of her father's love to complete her dreams.

**Charlotte student** continued from page 4

In addition to Spanish, she has excelled in other subjects, including Advanced Placement biology and calculus.

Because of her hearing loss, Aufgebauer had to work much harder than other students in class, relying on lip reading and visual aids to help her understand the coursework.

In the fall, she will attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on a four-year scholarship.

## New Council Leadership to Begin



Felton Williams

Felton Williams, school board president of California's Long Beach Unified School District, takes the reins as chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors, effective July 1.

He succeeds Superintendent Richard Carranza of the San Francisco Unified School District to lead the policymaking body of the national coalition representing 70 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. The Council's 140-member board is composed of the



Kaya Henderson

superintendent and a school board member from each of the districts.

Currently chair-elect, Williams will serve a one-year term as board chair while Chancellor Kaya Henderson of the District of Columbia Public Schools will assume his post.



Lawrence Feldman

The Council's 2016-17 leadership team will also include Lawrence Feldman, school board member of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. He was elected secretary-treasurer to succeed

Chancellor Henderson.

"With Dr. Williams' leadership experience in Long Beach, we are confident that the Council's board will steer urban-school reforms forward," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.



Portland students cheer at a school board meeting when board members unanimously passed a resolution supporting ethnic studies in all high schools.

## Portland Students Campaign for Ethnic Studies

Oregon's Portland Public Schools recently passed a resolution to ensure that ethnic studies courses are offered in all district high schools by 2018, and the district's students played a big role in making it happen.

Student leaders from the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) as well as other organizations began raising awareness for an ethnic studies curriculum months ago and even started a campaign called "Missing Pages of History." The campaign highlighted the need for teaching broader history in classes, specifically more history lessons about people of color. Approximately 45 percent of district students are non-white.

The students' determination paid off last month when the school board unanimously passed a resolution directing Portland Schools Superintendent Carole Smith to develop an implementation plan, in collaboration with APANO students, that will require all high schools by the fall of 2018 to offer ethnic studies courses.

The board's resolution also calls for the creation of an ethnic studies oversight committee and student advisory council to design and implement expanded ethnic studies curriculum, teacher training and budget recommendations.

The students' efforts were acknowledged by district officials at the school board meeting where the resolution was voted on.

"You guys rock!" Superintendent Smith told the student leaders, while board member Julie Esparza Brown commented on how proud she was of them. "This was a student-generated initiative, and you did a fabulous job with it," Esparza Brown told the students.

### Pell Grants *continued from page 1*

not have to pay for any courses they take at participating colleges.

At nearly half of postsecondary institutions with dual enrollment programs, the majority of students must pay for the courses they take, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Jackson Public Schools is not the only big-city school district that will benefit from this program. Other districts include New Jersey's Newark Public Schools, which is partnering with Bard College to extend its early college program. The initiative enables Newark high school students to earn 60 college credits as well as an associate degree from Bard.



## Council Fall Conference Registration Begins

The Council of the Great City Schools will hold its 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 19-23, in Miami.

Hosted by Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the conference will bring together more than 1,000 urban school superintendents, board members, senior administrators and college deans of education who will assemble at the Intercontinental Hotel to discuss issues in urban education and share information and best practices to improve outcomes for urban students.

To register for the conference, access the Council's web site at: <http://www.cgcs.org>. Registration for the conference can only be conducted online.



## Future Pittsburgh Teachers?

Male students of color from Pittsburgh Public Schools recently participated in a day-long workshop held by the school district to encourage them to consider becoming teachers. Though more than 60 percent of the students in the district are people of color, approximately 85 percent of teachers are white and primarily women. One of the participants, Trevon Stanton, a junior at Carrick High School, said that throughout his education, he's rarely had a teacher who looked like him, and that's why he's considering becoming a teacher one day. "First off, it starts with me," said Stanton. "If no one's going to be the change, then I will."

## Philly District Seeks To Be 'Green'

In an effort to reduce the district's energy consumption and create healthy schools, the School District of Philadelphia recently launched its first-ever sustainability plan.

The plan, known as GreenFutures, will provide a five-year framework to create more eco-friendly schools to lower the district's environmental footprint, conserve resources and encourage district staff, students, and school communities to participate in developing and implementing sustainability initiatives.

The plan has specific targets and goals, including increasing the district's waste diversion rate from landfills by 10 percent by implementing a recycling program in all schools.

The district also aims to implement an energy education program with the goal of reducing energy consumption by 20 percent within the next five years. To achieve this goal, every school will receive a toolkit of energy management equipment and supplies to help track and measure energy use.

### Green Schoolyards

Under the plan, the district will work to create green schoolyards, and programming and curriculum will be developed to transform green schoolyards into outdoor classrooms.

And in an effort to make students healthier, the district will also encourage more students to walk or bike to school and develop a plan to increase drinking water access, including a plan to help schools purchase and install bottle-filling stations.

GreenFutures was developed over a two-year period by district staff who collaborated with several local agencies. The initiative is modeled after Greenworks, the city's sustainability framework.

*Philly District continued on page 12*



## Fresno Graduation Rate Surpasses the Nation's

The overall graduation rate of California's Fresno Unified School District has reached 83.8 percent, surpassing the nation's 82 percent high-school graduation rate.

The California Department of Education recently confirmed Fresno's graduation rates, acknowledging a 4.5 percent increase over the previous year leading to the district's four-year graduation rate for 2014-15 of 83.8 percent.

In California's agricultural area, Fresno is a city that has also seen its public school system's student dropout rate continue to decrease from 14 percent last year to 11.7 percent this year.

But what's really significant is that the Fresno Unified School District has seen substantial progress among its Hispanic, Asian and African American students.

Hispanic students' graduation rates rose to 82.3 percent in 2014-15, a 10.8 percent hike over four years. Asian students' graduation rates were 90.9 percent, a 9.9 per-

cent increase over four years. And African American students' graduation rates were 82.1 percent, a 15.2 percent boost over four years.

"The Fresno Unified School District is focused on keeping all students in school and on target to graduate," says Superintendent Michael Hanson in a news release. "The rising graduation rates reflect the commitment from the Board of Education to invest resources that provide students more opportunities to graduate with the greatest number of choices from the widest array of options."



Michael Hanson

## Atlanta Voters Approve Sales Tax Hike

Atlanta Public Schools has voters to thank for the recent extension of the Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) that could raise up to \$546 million in the next five years for the school district.

E-SPLOST is a one-penny sales tax that will be used to build new and safer facilities for students, renovate existing buildings, improve transportation, alleviate overcrowding in some areas and assist with debt from projects.

The extension relieves local property owners and allows anyone, including tourists and non-residents, who make a retail purchase in the city of Atlanta to help pay for Atlanta school improvements.

"Thank you Atlanta for this reinvestment in Atlanta's kids," said Atlanta Schools Superintendent Meria Carstarphen in a press release. "These dollars will be committed to the infrastructure needs of the school district."

## Attendance Campaign Reaches Goal in Cleveland to Reduce Absenteeism

The Cleveland Municipal School District last July launched a citywide campaign called "Get to School! You Can Make It" that has reached its intended purpose: reducing student absenteeism.

The proportion of students who missed 10 or more days of classes has declined 11 percent when compared with the average for the previous three years, according to Cleveland school district data for the 2015-16 school year. This result is equivalent to about 2,340 students.

The goal was to lower the average of 56.4 percent of the number of students

missing more than 10 days by 10 percent.

The attendance campaign throughout the city was visible on billboards, yard signs, bus placards and radio spots. And the



"Get to School! You Can Make It" drive was embraced by parents and supported by community partners, led by the Cleveland Browns professional football team.

The Cleveland school district recently celebrated the success of the campaign with Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon and others thanking families, students, principals, teachers, clergy and a number of partners for their help.

Gordon indicated that the 2015-16 school year push to increase student attendance was just a start. "This isn't a one-year deal," he said. "We made progress, but there's more work to be done."

### A National Problem

Chronic student absenteeism is a national problem, highlighted recently by the U.S. Department of Education in data revealing that more than six million students – or 13 percent of all students -- missed at least 15 days of school in the 2013-14 school year.

## Have the Draft Supplement-Not-Supplant Regulations Poisoned the ESSA Regulatory Process?

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was enacted on December 10th at a White House ceremony that seemed to usher in a new bipartisan “era of good feeling” about federal elementary and secondary education policy. Virtually every organization and constituency supported passage of the reauthorization bill and immediately focused on the implementation process for the 2016-17 transition. But then the negotiated rulemaking process jolted everyone back to reality.

The Department’s draft “supplement not supplant” regulations (SNS), in particular, drew the ire of school officials as well as the chairmen of House and Senate education committees. The draft signaled that the Department wanted to impose new federal requirements on issues that they failed to win during the regular legislative process and that had little basis in the actual language of the new Act. Moreover, what the Department proposed had been considered and rejected by Congress. To make matters worse, the negotiated rulemaking process itself exacerbated the passions surrounding the issues by routinely driving wedges in between practitioners and advocacy groups and dismissing concerns from teachers, principals, superintendents, and a state chief that the proposal could not be implemented as drafted. At this point, the process has largely poisoned the ability of anyone to solve the underlying issues.

At the same time, the Department issued new accountability/state plan regulations in the May 31st Federal Register. The new 83-page notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) details the requirements that the Department wants in the ESSA accountability provisions and specifies the content of required state plans. The proposed regulations also establish federal timelines and parameters that some ESSA supporters believe should have been left to state and local discretion. The draft does add a welcome new planning period beyond the transition year, but the timelines and limitations have little basis in the Act. Of particular concern to the Great City Schools are the mandated statewide criteria for the entrance and exit of English learners from their language-acquisition services. The criteria — procedures in the Act — could lead states to set rigid one-size-fits-all deadlines and strictures for this extremely diverse student population. Additionally, requirements for the identification of schools for federally-required interventions



under the Act’s accountability system could substantially expand the number of schools deemed in need of improvement.

It is unclear at this point whether the broader identification of underperforming schools, particularly for Targeted Support and Improvement Interventions, will outstrip the capacity of state and local systems to handle the number of schools that are likely to get categorized. Or will states and local school districts look for loopholes to better manage the new system of interventions and supports. Neither extreme is desirable.

Nonetheless, it is the proposed supplement/supplant regulations that are likely to cause the biggest problems if finalized. The cost of complying and the numbers of people who might need to be transferred from one school to another could be substantial. It is hard to imagine how the nation’s school systems could absorb the estimated \$8.5 billion in costs that the Center for American Progress estimated in March 2015 that might be needed to comply with the requirement. Moreover, the most obvious strategy to comply with the mandate, i.e., transferring a district’s more highly-paid (e.g., 50 and 60 year-old) teachers, principals, support personnel, and custodians into Title I schools would not necessarily provide an academic benefit to children since the research on tenure and effectiveness has been decidedly mixed. Ironically, the draft SNS “salary equivalency” approach that the Department has proposed is contrary to the Administration’s previous national priorities calling for the placement of highly effective teachers in the higher-poverty Title I schools and empowering principals to hire the best available teachers for their school’s instructional program. While the Department indicates that it is still weighing the details of a proposed SNS regulation, there appears to be no resolution in sight.

Unfortunately, how the Department has handled this situation is tainting how various educational organizations and Congressional members are viewing all of the regulations that it has drafted, not just SNS. In fact, it is making the new legislation less of a reason to celebrate than the December ceremony portended.



## Top Hispanic School Administrator Named

Victoria Saldala, director of the bilingual/ESOL department at Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was recently recognized as the Latino Administrator of the Year by the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS).

Saldala received the honor at ALAS' second annual Leaders in Education Awards Gala in Washington, D.C. This event recognizes the best practices in public education serving Hispanic communities.

## Milwaukee Jazz Group Wins *Downbeat* Award

*Downbeat* recently recognized the Jazz Lab Combo of the Milwaukee High School of the Arts as one of just two student groups nationwide to win the magazine's 2016 Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance award.

This is the third consecutive year a group from Milwaukee High School of the Arts has been honored by *Downbeat*.

Doug Syme, the school's director of jazz studies and arts department chair, called the award "a testament to the students' hard work and deep respect for the music."



The Jazz Lab Combo of the Milwaukee High School of the Arts.

## School Climate, Culture Focus of Summit

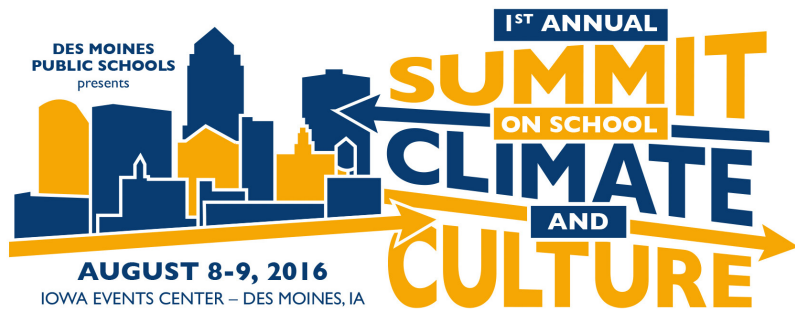
The Des Moines Public Schools in Iowa will hold a national summit aimed at improving school climate and culture through professional development, skill building and application of best practices and research.

The school district's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Summit on School Climate and Culture will be held Aug. 8 and 9 at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, and will feature experts such as Erin Gruwell, teacher, ed-

ucation activist and founder of the Freedom Writers Foundation.

The two-day summit will include a series of workshops, speeches and breakout sessions, focusing on key areas such as best practices in improving student behavior, cultural proficiency and stakeholder engagement.

For more information and to register online, access <http://www.dmschools.org/climateculturesummit/>.



## 2016 Presidential Scholars Announced



Jared Brown

Jared Brown and Kaylin Sturtevant are students at the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas.

And they are among the 25 students in urban school districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools who have been named 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars.



Kaylin Sturtevant

The students have been recognized by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, appointed by President Obama.

"This year's class of Presidential Schol-

ars continues a more than 50 year trend of honoring students who've shown excellence in their educational, artistic and civic pursuits," said U.S. Secretary of Education John King.

The 2016 scholars from Council member school districts hail from cities, including Anchorage, San Diego, District of Columbia, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Honolulu, Chicago, Louisville, Boston, Omaha, Las Vegas, New York City, Dallas, Houston and Portland, Ore. Some big-city school districts had more than one Presidential Scholar.

Of the three million students expected to graduate high school this spring in the U.S., more than 5,600 candidates qualified for the 2016 Presidential Scholar recognition. Only 160 were selected.

Each of the honorees will receive a Presidential Scholar Medallion at a ceremony scheduled in June in Washington, D.C.



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

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

## Great City Grads



**Muhammad Ali**

**Boxer and Humanitarian**

**1960 Graduate**

**Central High School**

**Jefferson County Public Schools  
 (Louisville, Ky)**

## Nominations Sought for 2016 Top Urban Leader

In October last year, Pittsburgh school board member Bill Isler stood before a packed ballroom to be honored as the urban educator of the year.

He received the Green-Garner award at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Fall Conference in Long Beach.

Nominations are now being sought for superintendents for the 27th Annual Green-Garner Award, named in honor of Richard Green, the first African-American chancellor of the New York City school system, and Edward Garner, former school board president for Denver Public Schools.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK K-12 Education and Scholastic, Inc., the award is given in alternating years to an outstanding school board member and superintendent from 70 of the largest urban school systems in the nation.

It will be presented at the Council's Annual Fall Conference in October in Miami. Deadline for applications, which can be accessed at <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/50>, is August 8.

### Queen Smith Award

The Council is also seeking nominations for the Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education. Sponsored by McGraw-Hill, the award honors an urban school educator who has made significant contributions to education and to the community.

The deadline to apply is August 15 and applications can be accessed at <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/49>.

**Philly District** continued from page 8

"GreenFutures was designed to answer the question, 'What can we do today, as a school district, to enhance our children's well-being and preserve our limited resources for future generations?'" said Philadelphia Schools Superintendent William Hite.

Beginning in June 2017, an annual progress report will be released to share measurable outcomes and gain feedback from the community and the public.