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Honolulu Student's Self-Motivation Leads Him to Princeton This Fall

At Farrington High School in Honolulu, many of the students come from economically disadvantaged families and the last student from Farrington to be accepted into an Ivy League university was four years ago. But that recently changed when 18-year-old Jake Martin, who is also this year's school valedictorian, was recently accepted into Princeton University.

Martin, who has a 4.3 grade-point average, will enter Princeton in the fall with a four-year-scholarship and all his expenses paid. But the road to the Ivy League has not been an easy one for Martin, who grew up poor on a farm in a village in the Philippines wearing hand-me-down clothes.

At age 7, he and his mom and his sister moved to Hawaii to live with his father and older brother. In Hawaii, the family struggled financially and moved residences at least 10 times.

Education wasn't a priority for his parents or for Martin's older brother and sister, who dropped out of school their sophomore year. But Martin was determined not to follow in their footsteps and made friends with other students who wanted to succeed academically.

"Luckily, I met a lot of people who did take their education seriously," said Martin in an interview with the *Hawaii Filipino Chronicle*. "In middle school, I met friends who

Hawaii Student continued on page 5

Black Male Summit in D.C. Results In Kansas City Mentoring Program

In 2012, the Council of the Great City Schools and the U.S. Department of Education held a National Summit on Educational Excellence and Opportunity for African American Males in Washington, D.C. At the end of the summit, attendees were challenged to go back to their respective school districts and tackle the problem.

Derald Davis, an administrator at Lincoln College Preparatory Academy in Kansas City, Mo., attended the summit with Superintendent R. Stephen Green of the Kansas City School District. And before the summit had even ended, Davis was thinking of creating a mentoring program at an elementary school. He even devised a name for the program, *Each One, Teach*



High school students at Lincoln College Preparatory Academy in Kansas City served as mentors to elementary school students.

One. "I want to teach the young men I work with that they have a responsibility to other black males," Davis said in an interview with the *Urban Educator* two years ago.

Black Male continued on page 12



Honolulu student Jake Martin is congratulated by his family at his graduation ceremony.

L.A. District Partners With City in Summer Initiative for Youths

This summer, Los Angeles Unified School District is set to transform its city into a hands-on learning laboratory through education and work-ready opportunities for youth in the Los Angeles community.

In partnership with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, the nation's second largest school district recently announced the launch of the Los Angeles Summer of Learning program, a citywide initiative to keep youth engaged in learning throughout the summer.

The Summer of Learning program, targeted to young people ages 3-24, will provide access to 100 learning opportuni-

L.A. District continued on page 7

Council Awards Scholarships to 'Innovators and Leaders of Tomorrow'

Four recent high-school graduates from North Carolina, Washington, D.C. and two from Florida have something in common: all won the 2014 ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarship.

In early June, the Council of the Great City Schools announced the "scholars" among several hundred graduating high-school seniors nationwide who applied for the highly competitive scholarship. They were considered for their academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

The scholarship program was created by former astronaut and physician

Dr. Bernard Harris Jr., the first African American to walk in space, and ExxonMobil to help underrepresented students pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies and to increase diversity in the STEM workforce.

The awards are given annually to African-American and Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 67 urban school districts represented by the Council.

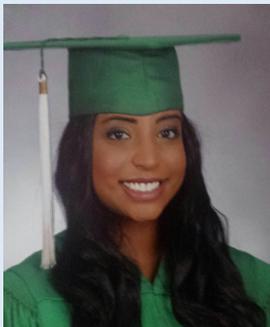
"These scholarships create a launching pad for talented students to pursue post-secondary studies and careers in the challenging STEM fields," said Michael Casserly, executive director, Council of the Great City Schools. "With the generous support of ExxonMobil and Dr. Harris,

these young men and women have an opportunity to reach the stars and become innovators and leaders of tomorrow."

Each scholar receives \$5,000 for continued education in a STEM-related field. This year's award winners are:

- Deandra Chetram, Charles W. Flanagan High School, Pembroke Pines, FL, Broward County Public Schools;
- Bridgette LaFaye, Woodrow Wilson High School, Washington, D.C., District of Columbia Public Schools;

Scholarships continued on page 3



Deandra Chetram



Bridgette LaFaye



Leonardo Sanchez-Noya



Ezra Zerihun



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Felton Williams
Board Member, Long Beach

Executive Director
Michael Casserly

Editor
Henry Duvall
hduvall@cgcs.org

Associate Editor
Tonya Harris
tharris@cgcs.org

Staff Writer
Danyell Taylor
dtaylor@cgcs.org

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Council of the Great City Schools
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Find the Council on:



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- Leonardo Sanchez-Noya, John A. Ferguson Senior High School, Miami, FL, Miami-Dade County Public Schools; and,
- Ezra Zerihun, The Early College at Guilford, Greensboro, NC, Guilford County Public Schools.

In the fall, Chetram will attend the University of Florida to study biology. LaFaye is going to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to pursue a career in materials science and engineering. Sanchez-Noya will study biomedical engineering at Yale University, and Zerihun plans to major in computer science at North Carolina State University.

“Our country is driven by our ability to create and develop the most advanced technologies and solutions,” said Dr. Harris. “Engineers and scientists are the catalysts, and by providing these scholarships, we are planting seeds in the minds of these bright young students, especially those from diverse backgrounds, to support their interest in the exciting and rewarding careers in STEM.”

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

Miami-Dade to Earn Advanced Accreditation

Miami-Dade County Public Schools is expected to be the largest district in the nation to achieve AdvancEd/SACS CASI accreditation for the next five years.

AdvancEd announced that the nation’s fourth largest school system scored 298.73, an above average score as compared to the average global score 282.45, in a review process that analyzes the Index of Education Quality for a district. The score is based on three different categories: teaching and learning impact, leadership capac-

Superintendent in Memphis to Remain at Helm; Fort Worth School Leader Steps Down



Dorsey Hopson

The Shelby County Board of Education in Memphis recently extended Superintendent Dorsey Hopson’s contract through June, 2018 to maintain stable leadership.

Hopson took the reins of the district at the start of the 2013-14 school year as the first superintendent of the newly merged Shelby County school system. Two years earlier, the local citizenry voted to disband the Memphis City Schools, merging it with Shelby County Schools.

“When we take a look at the most successful organizations, they all have strong and stable leadership,” said Shelby school board chairman Kevin Woods in announcing the contract extension. “That is what we are getting with Superintendent Hopson....”

While the superintendent in Memphis will maintain his post, Superintendent Walter Dansby of the Fort Worth Independent School District in Texas stepped

down from his position on June 2 – after 40 years in the school system and becoming the first African American superintendent of the 83,000-student district three years ago.

Raised in Fort Worth and a graduate of the urban district, Dansby joined the district as a teacher and coach in 1974. Throughout his career he has served as a high school principal, area dean of instruction as well as various administrative roles overseeing instruction, athletics, student affairs and maintenance.

“After 40 years working for this district,” Dansby said in a press release, “...it’s nearly impossible to summarize all I am feeling right now. So I am going to choose to focus on one overwhelming feeling -- gratitude.”

Patricia Linares has been selected as interim superintendent to replace Dansby. Linares started with the district in 1996 as an executive director. In 2010, she retired as a deputy superintendent.

Change in Milwaukee

The Fort Worth school system is not the only urban school district approving leadership changes this summer.

Darrienne Driver, Milwaukee Public Schools chief innovation officer, was recently named as acting superintendent, effective July 1. She replaces outgoing Superintendent Gregory Thornton, who will lead the Baltimore City school system.

Driver has served as the district’s chief innovation officer since July 2012. She leads district efforts to improve outcomes in the schools in greatest need of improvement; oversees the district’s implementation of the Wisconsin Common Core State Standards; recruits educational partners to assist in efforts to improve student achievement; and oversees the district’s contracted services that serve students through alternative programming.



Atlanta Valedictorians Chosen as Gates Scholars

Two black male students in Atlanta Public Schools have not only been selected as valedictorians of their graduating class but have also been named to this year's Class of 2014 Gates Millennium Scholars.



Sharod McClendon

Valedictorian Sharod McClendon of The Business, Engineering, Science and Technology (B.E.S.T.) Academy High School was born to a single, teenaged mother who would not let him become a statistic of the impoverished, violent drug-infested neighborhoods within which they lived.

In his emotional valedictorian speech, he credits his young mother's encouragement to persevere as the sustaining factor in his academic success. As his journey in life leads him to attend Louisiana State University in the fall, McClendon had these words to share with his peers:

"I have been the book that someone picked up, briefly examined, then returned to the shelf without taking the time to read the story, my story," said McClendon. "But today, in this moment that will never come again, I stand before you as the first valedictorian of B.E.S.T. Academy and the first man in my family to graduate from high

school."

For Valedictorian Kingsley Iyawe of Atlanta's New Schools at Carver, his mother also played a pivotal role in helping him learn to persevere. When he lost his mother to cancer in the 9th grade, Iyawe admits it was devastating.

"I had to realize...", said Iyawe, "You have to cope with the loss of your mother and you have to keep going on because the world is not going to stop."

Iyawe made history this year as the first male valedictorian of Carver High School of Technology, graduating with a 3.96 grade-point average. He gained admission to more than 25 schools and will head to Morehouse College this fall to realize his career goal of becoming an actuary.



Kingsley Iyawe

As both scholars head to their respective universities, they share the prestige of being named 2014 Gates Millennium Scholars by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Selected

as two of 1,000 students from across the country, both young men have been awarded a good-through-graduation scholarship to use at any college or university of their choice.

The goal of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program is to remove barriers to education for high-performing, low-income students. In addition to financial support, recipients will be provided leadership development opportunities, mentoring, academic and social support.

Homeless Students Defy the Odds

Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Fla., has more than 1,000 homeless students.

One of those students is Griffin Furlong, a 2014 graduate of First Coast High School. Furlong became homeless at the age of 6 after his mother died, and lived in shelters until he was 9.



Griffin Furlong

His family recently became homeless again in April, but he hasn't let the adversity derail him from becoming the valedictorian of his high school.

At his recent valedictorian speech, Furlong offered encouragement to his fellow graduates, even though there were times he wanted to give up.

"To everyone sitting here before me, class of 2014, do not live a life without purpose," said Furlong in the *Florida Times Union*. "Deep down inside, you know you have something to show, whether you realize it or not."

Furlong's teachers praise him for his strong work ethic, including digital media teacher Natalie Donald who had no idea Furlong was homeless. "He's made straight As across the board in my class, and he never once used his circumstances as a crutch to justify not being able to do anything," said Donald in the *Times Union*.

His remarkable achievements have made national news, with his story being featured on ABC News, NBC News, *TIME* and *People* magazine.

In addition, a fundraising web site called GoFundMe.com has raised almost \$70,000 toward his tuition at Florida State University, which he will attend in the fall and where he plans to study civil engineering.

Homeless Students continued on page 5

Homeless Students *continued from page 4*

Finding Purpose in the Arts

As a high school freshman at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina, Britany BOWENS was concerned more about fitting in with the crowd than her education, and eventually dropped out of school at the end of her first year.



Britany BOWENS

But BOWENS never gave up hope, and two years later she returned to school, where she was introduced to the musical theater program at Northwest School of the Arts. It was at the arts magnet school where BOWENS found her passion and became determined to excel despite her circumstances. Although her home life was challenging, she continued to push forward with auditions, eventually landing roles in shows like *Footloose* and *The Addams Family*.

As an actress in the school's production of *The Color Purple*, she and cast members were invited to the International Thespian Festival in Nebraska, a national high school drama education program and performance competition that offers a platform for college recruiting.

In her senior year of high school, BOWENS was offered more than \$26,000 in scholarships from St. Mary's University of Minnesota, where she will major in musical theater with a minor in entrepreneurship, with the goal of becoming an actress and ultimately opening her own theatre company in Charlotte.

"I never really saw myself graduating from high school, but if it weren't for my early experiences, I would have never found theater," said BOWENS.

Fresno Student Defies Stereotypes

Jessica Morales, a senior at Design Science Early College High School in Fresno, Calif., was recently accepted to the University of California at Berkeley and UCLA. Her admission to one of these two universities will make her the first woman in her family to have the opportunity to earn an education beyond middle school.

Morales is the daughter of farm workers who remembers being awakened in the early morning hours by her parents who would drop her and her brother off at a nearby woman's home. Hours later her parents would pick the siblings up with sweat on their faces, aches in their backs and cuts on their hands from the long hours of harsh labor they endured in the fields.

Growing up in poverty, Morales recalled how she didn't know it wasn't normal to have four children share one bedroom or that a mattress thrown on the floor wasn't a bed.

But she also didn't know about the amazing opportunities that the future held for her, including the chance to attend Design Science Early College High School,

which offers students a small, personalized learning environment in a non-traditional high school setting.

During the first two years, students take college courses at the high school, while in



Jessica Morales

years 3-4, students are enrolled in Fresno City College and maintain a full-load of courses where they work toward earning 60 units of transferable credit to a California university and their high school diploma.

At Design Science, Morales excelled, earning a 4.10 grade-point average and honors from Fresno City College while serving as yearbook editor.

One of her biggest inspirations has been social science teacher Gabe Villaseñor, who she credits with seeing the potential in her. "I was content with not failing classes and he encouraged me to strive to get A's," said Morales.

After graduation, the daughter of farm workers plans to come back to the Central Valley and help her community.

"I am a Hispanic young woman who has had a chance to be something more than my stereotype," said Morales.

Hawaii Student *continued from page 1*

motivated me and made me realize the importance of education."

The first in his family to attend college, Martin has been a star student at Farrington and also took classes such as biochemistry and English at Honolulu Community College.

In addition to academics, Martin was active in extracurricular activities, creating a club for underclassmen who are mentored by seniors as well as competing on the school's swim team.

At Princeton, Martin plans to major in engineering or economics, and after graduation would like to start his own non-profit organization to help teens.

Martin knows that Princeton University is a very different environment than Farrington High School, which is located in an urban area and where 61 percent of the students are Filipino and 66.8 percent of the students receive free or reduced price lunch. And in an interview with *KHON-TV2*, Martin admitted that one of his biggest fears will be someone asking him how did he get accepted into Princeton.

"But I kind of remind myself that hey, even with a socioeconomically disadvantaged school like Farrington, I was still able to get my own resources, be an independent student and get accepted into the same school as other private school students," Martin stressed.

Portland Twins Share Stage as Valedictorians

Brandon Orozco excels at science and math, while his twin brother Brian Orozco does well in English. Although the two have different academic interests, they have one thing in common: they are both valedictorians of the 2014 graduating class at Cleveland High School in Portland, Ore.

In the fall, the identical twins, who have shared a bedroom all of their lives, will be attending colleges on opposite sides of the country. Brandon is the recipient of a Gates Millennium Scholarship, which will pay for all his expenses at Harvey Mudd College in California, while Brian received a scholarship to attend Yale University in Connecticut.

The brothers credit their parents, Mexican immigrants who had never gone to college, for instilling the importance of educa-

tion in their lives when they were young. Their parents enrolled them in Head Start pre-kindergarten programs as well as a Spanish-language immersion program in elementary school.

At Cleveland High School, the twins were also student leaders with Brandon heading a student union for Latino students, while Brian launched a poetry club and was senior class vice president.

Heidi Tolentino, a counselor at Cleveland High School, marvels at the twins work ethic.

“There’s their willingness to ask for help, their ability to push through when things were difficult, and it’s really about the hard work,” said Tolentino, in *The Oregonian*. “They’re so willing to go the extra mile to make it happen, always.”



Twins Brandon and Brian Orozco are valedictorians at Cleveland High School in Portland, Ore. Photo credit: Nicole Dungca / *The Oregonian*

Parents Push Dallas Twins to No. 1 and No. 2



James Madison

Menique Hopkins Madison, a mother of twin high school boys in Dallas, wanted her sons to attend a school in a diverse urban environment where they would be taught by teachers who looked like them.

So four years ago, she moved her sons, James and Matthew, from a suburban school to an urban high school, Madison High School in South Dallas. And the move paid off, with James being named the valedictorian of his 2014 graduating class and Matthew being named the salutatorian.

“My sons had never had a black male teacher,” said Hopkins Madison in the *Dallas Morning News*. “As young black men, I felt maybe that’s an important thing that they should be taught by another black man.”

At Madison High School, the fraternal twins found supportive teachers, including black male teachers, and excelled in their classes.

The twins also had parents who have been a big part of their education from the very beginning. The twins were reading by the age of 3 and their parents limited television to no more than one hour a day, and did not let them play video games. They believe their emphasis on the importance of education was absorbed by their sons.



Matthew Madison

In the fall, James, who graduated with a 4.0 grade-point average, will attend the University of Texas in Austin, where he plans to major in computer science; while his brother Matthew, who graduated with a 3.8 GPA, will attend the University of Texas at Arlington and major in software engineering.

A Graduate’s Choice: 24 Universities

When Akosua Bekoe’s family moved to the United States from Ghana seven years ago, they sought American opportunities that could change their lives. For Bekoe, it was the exceptional education she received as a student at the Early College at Guilford in Greensboro, N.C., that provided the chance.

Bekoe’s journey to educational excellence resulted in acceptance to 24 universities-- including six of the eight Ivy League schools-- and 22 scholarships totaling \$4.4 million. Bekoe has received more scholarship money than any other student in Guilford County Schools’ Class of 2014.

She credits her academic success to the opportunities she found at Early College, created through a public-private partnership between the Guilford County school district and Guilford College to offer an intensive college-preparatory education to ambitious high school students. Honors courses are offered in ninth and tenth grades and college courses in eleventh and twelfth grades.

“I’ve really had a lot of opportunities to take classes that traditional high schoolers wouldn’t be able to take,” Bekoe said of her Early College experience. “I love to learn, so that’s been really exciting to me.”

That curiosity to learn led her to apply and receive admission to 24 universities, such as Princeton, Dartmouth and Brown. She applied to all of those institutions as a result of scholarships and waivers.

And Bekoe has made her final decision: Columbia University in New York City, where she plans to study economics.



Guilford County student Akosua Bekoe receives a high school diploma at her graduation ceremony from Greensboro’s Early College in North Carolina.

New Council Leadership Begins 2014-15 Year

Jumoke Hinton Hodge, a school board member with California's Oakland Unified School District, takes the helm of the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors, effective July 1.



Jumoke Hinton Hodge
Photo by Philip Cohen

She succeeds Superintendent Valeria Silva of Minnesota's Saint Paul Public Schools as chair of the policymaking body of the national coalition representing 67 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. The Council's 134-member board is composed of the superintendent and a school board member



Felton Williams

from each of the districts represented.

As part of the Council's leadership team for the 2014-15 school year, Superintendent Richard Carranza of the San Francisco Unified School District becomes chair-elect, moving up from the secretary-treasurer post.

Felton Williams, a school board member with California's Long Beach Unified School District, has been elected secretary-treasurer.

"With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in the forefront of many of our initiatives, we are confident that the Council's board will steer urban-school reforms forward despite the obstacles," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Council PSA Aims At Indy 500 Race

More than 1.2 million fans viewed the Council of the Great City Schools' public service announcement on the Common Core State Standards at the recent Indianapolis 500, one of the most prestigious motor races in the world.

This is the second time this year that the 30-second spot has aired multiple times on a jumbo-tron during a major automobile race. In February, the PSA aired at the Daytona 500, NASCAR's most prestigious race. And in late July, the spot will be featured at NASCAR's Brickyard 400.

The PSA is intended to increase awareness of the Common Core State Standards, initially adopted in 45 states and the District of Columbia. It has also been airing on TV stations in a number of markets around the nation since late 2012, including on Spanish-language television.

View the video at: <https://vimeo.com/98488715>.

Baton Rouge School Wins EPA Competition For Energy Conservation in *Battle of the Buildings*

Claiborne Elementary School in Baton Rouge, La., recently beat out teams from more than 3,000 buildings across the nation to win the Environmental Protection Agency's annual Energy Star National Building Competition: *Battle of the Buildings*.

The school won for cutting its energy use nearly in half.

"When we save money on energy costs and increase energy efficiency, we all win," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "I congratulate the competitors and finalists for their dedication to reducing emissions and carbon pollution, and for their leadership in increasing energy efficiency to combat the impacts of our changing climate."

The *Battle of the Buildings* competition supports President Obama's Climate Action Plan, which calls for buildings to cut

waste and become at least 20 percent more energy efficient by 2020.

Teams from more than 25 different types of commercial buildings competed in this year's Energy Star National Building Competition, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Claiborne Elementary School taught students and teachers what actions they could take to save energy, which included adjusting thermostats, keeping doors and windows closed when heating or A/C is on, and turning off lights when leaving a room. The school also fine-tuned various controls to reduce energy use.

"This was a real life lesson for our students, many of whom have adopted the energy conservation practices learned here for use in their own homes," stressed Claiborne Principal Stephanie Tate.

L.A. District *continued from page 1*

ties online, and in person, at city parks and libraries, schools, museums and cultural institutions. The curriculum offers learning options in science, technology, engineering, arts and math, as well as a work-readiness pathway focused on in-demand skills needed in the modern economy.

The citywide initiative brings together a coalition of public, private and non-profit partners to offer connected learning opportunities that help students further develop the knowledge and skills needed to aid in their academic and professional success.

According to Los Angeles Schools Superintendent John Deasy, more than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth is due to unequal access to summer learning opportunities.

"Thanks to the tremendous collaboration of our community partners, businesses, neighborhoods and city agencies, L.A. Summer of Learning will help increase access for youth, particularly in underserved neighborhoods," said Deasy.

D.C., Dallas and Oakland Take New Steps in Evaluating Teachers

District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson recently delayed evaluating teachers by student test scores for one year to help educators grasp the shifts entailed in the district's exams based on the Common Core State Standards.

"I want my teachers focused on teaching and not worried about whether or not the hiccups that come with implementing a new test are going to impact their livelihood," she said in the *Washington Post*.

In applauding the decision, Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, stressed, "DCPS is being thoughtful, prudent and balanced in its decision to delay personnel evaluations based in part on the assessments while district staff and teachers learn how the new tests will work and what instructional and administrative changes will be necessary."

The D.C. public school system in 2009 became one of the first districts in the nation to link student test scores to evaluate teacher performance, compensation and job security. It was also one of the first to implement the Common Core State Standards.

New in Dallas

A new teacher evaluation system that rewards teachers based on their performance in the classroom was recently approved by the Dallas Independent School District.

The Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) will be implemented in the 2014-2015 school year and will replace the previous method the district used to compensate teachers based on tenure and college degrees. Instead, teachers will be compensated based on their performance, student perceptions and student achievement.

According to district officials, the strategic compensation plan in TEI provides teachers with the opportunity to increase their salaries in shorter spans of time.

For the majority of teachers, 50 percent of their evaluation will be based on performance, 35 percent on student achievement results, and 15 percent on student survey

results. The district will also create a research-based student survey in English and Spanish, administered to students in third through 12th grades that will provide feedback to teachers and input for a teacher's evaluation.

The TEI eliminates the traditional teacher salary schedule and replaces that schedule with nine levels of effectiveness, ranging from "Unsatisfactory" to "Master" teacher. The effectiveness level on the TEI scale to which a teacher will be assigned is based on the average of two years of annual evaluation ratings.

"No evaluation system will ever be able to completely capture everything a teacher does to support his or her students and help them succeed on their academic journey," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Mike Miles in a press release. "But this system represents a thoughtful approach to measuring the impact that teachers have on their students."

A Successful Program

And in California's Oakland Unified School District, a teacher evaluation pilot program that operates in two schools has been so successful that the program will expand to 25 additional schools next school year.

The Teacher Growth and Development System (TGDS) is a teacher evaluation system developed by the district in partnership with the Oakland Education Association as a way to provide teachers with opportunities to receive objective feedback from multiple sources and to support effective teaching.

The multiple measures of the evaluation process consist of observations, student work samples, student performance and student surveys, and are designed to help give teachers a comprehensive look at their teacher practice and enable them to identify areas of strength and growth.



Long Beach Promise Program Pays Dividends

Cleavona Jackson, a student at Nelson Academy in Long Beach, Calif., was joined by her father during a recent panel discussion celebrating the sixth anniversary of the Long Beach College Promise program. Jackson was one of 25 eighth-graders who received scholarships to Long Beach City College (LBCC) as part of the Promise program, which provides graduating seniors in the Long Beach Unified School District a free semester of tuition as well as guaranteed admission to California State University, Long Beach, (CSULB) for students who qualify.

Since the program's inception in 2008, more than 5,600 high school graduates have benefited from free enrollment at LBCC and there has been a 43 percent increase in the number of Long Beach students who have enrolled at CSULB.

Top Middle Schools In Nation Named

Northwest Magnet Middle School in Jackson, Miss., is among several urban schools named in the 50 Best Middle Schools in the United States by thebestschools.org, a site that helps parents make informed decisions about education through rankings and other resources.

Schools ranked in the 50 Best Middle Schools “have found a way to provide 7th and 8th graders with a rich school experience that prepares them superbly well for high school, college and life,” says thebestschools.org.

Northwest is an International Baccalaureate Middle Year Program school with students in grades six to eight. It is an “A” school based on the Mississippi Department of Education accountability results, and has received other accolades.



Cedrick Gray

“I am extremely proud of the academic accomplishments that have taken place at Northwest Middle School,” said Jackson Public Schools Superintendent Cedrick Gray. “This national recognition proves what we have said all along, that our students and teachers are some of the brightest in the entire country.”

Other urban school districts with middle schools ranked in the top 50 include Dallas, St. Louis, Miami-Dade County, New York City, Charleston, S.C., Honolulu and Clark County in Las Vegas.

Nashville District Offers Students A Personal Finance Course Online

In preparing high school students for their financial future and the digital world, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools this summer is offering a personal finance course through the MNPS Virtual School.

The course, which is a Tennessee state graduation requirement, is normally taught in a traditional classroom, but starting this summer, it is also offered online.

The personal finance class instructs students on how to make both short- and long-term financial goals. Students must weigh the options of higher education and career choices, looking into student loans and potential earnings from a variety of careers.

As they plan for their financial future, students must also take into consideration unavoidable financial needs, such as insurance costs and student loan debt. Students fill out tax forms, look into insurance options and learn about good and bad credit scores. The class will help students realize the importance of making wise choices with their money and eventually become fiscally responsible adults.

“Understanding financial management concepts is an important life skill,” said James Witty, MNPS Virtual School principal. “From credit to insurance to taxes, it is imperative that students understand the impact of real world choices. More and more, students are choosing to take this popular course online at MNPS Virtual School, Tennessee’s first and highest achieving public virtual school.”

Virtual School Requirement

In addition to the personal finance requirement, Metro Nashville Schools requires all high school students to take at least one class through the MNPS Virtual School. The goal for this requirement is to prepare students for the use of technology in both higher education and the workforce. Each course is taught by a v-teacher, who connects with students using discussion-based assessments via some form of technology, such as text messages or email.

The personal finance class is just one of many being offered this summer through the MNPS Virtual School, and it is not just high school students who can take advantage of the Virtual School’s opportunities. The v-courses are now available for middle school students. Both 7th and 8th grade students can enroll full-time, finishing their middle school career online. Eighth grade students can also choose to go part-time for advanced high school credit. Fall enrollment for part-time and full-time v-students is now open until August 1.

The MNPS Virtual School opened its virtual doors during the fall of 2011 and is noted as the first public virtual school in the state. For more information on MNPS Virtual School, visit <http://www.vlearn.mnps.org>.

Florida Teacher Wins \$25,000 Prize for ‘Superlative Classroom Practice’

A teacher in Florida’s Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa recently won the \$25,000 Fishman Prize for Superlative Classroom Practice, an award for exceptionally effective teachers working in high-poverty public schools.

Kelly Zunkiewicz, who teaches high-school AP calculus and pre-calculus hon-

ors and serves as a math coach, was one of four educators to receive the prize among 820 teachers from around the nation who applied.

In addition to the award, Fishman Prize winners participate in an intensive summer residency, allowing them to share their expertise with educators across the nation.



Hillsborough teacher Kelly Zunkiewicz is congratulated by her students for winning a \$25,000 teaching prize.

The E-Rate, The FCC, and Net Frugality

By Manish Naik, *Manager of Legislative Services*

Last summer, the White House announced a new technology initiative designed to enrich K-12 education and modernize classrooms. Specifically, the ConnectED program aimed to connect all of America's students to next-generation broadband and high-speed wireless in their schools, and empower teachers to use technology tools effectively.

The President announced that the existing E-Rate program, regulated by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), would play a major part in the digital transformation.

Despite a low funding cap established when the program began in 1996, the E-Rate has successfully supported basic communication services in all schools and helped a portion of the nation's poorest schools wire their classrooms for Internet access.

The ConnectED announcement thrilled the education community, which has long-supported the program and saw the initiative as an opportunity to finally build upon the success of the E-Rate.

Urban districts were hopeful that additional investments would expand E-Rate support to additional schools and spur the delivery of next-generation education services, including interactive instruction, blended learning, online assessments, computer adaptive testing, and 1:1 computing practices.

Over the past year, the Chairman of the FCC has followed up on the White House announcement with an intensive review of the E-Rate program, as well as releasing proposals for program changes to the public. The Council of the Great City Schools submitted four sets of comments to the FCC during this time, answering questions about how the E-Rate currently works and how it could work better for city schools, defending the program's funding priorities on the poorest schools and students, and highlighting the need for additional funding to reach the President's goals.



The Commission received thousands of comments from schools, districts, and education groups across the country, most of whom echoed the need to expand the program in order to deliver E-Rate services to more schools and meet the ConnectED promises.

The FCC finally appears ready to vote on a package of final rule changes in July, and the limited details emerging from the Chairman's office show the comments and suggestions of educators and local school systems have been basically ignored.

The package includes a five-year plan to install Wi-Fi in classrooms, while only attaching two years of funding, all of which comes from reprioritized existing money. The final rule is unlikely to outline how the Commission will deploy and fund high-capacity bandwidth to schools, other than promising to eliminate E-Rate support for current services that are not broadband-related.

The Chairman's office has also trumpeted that the new E-Rate will contribute four dollars for every one dollar spent by the poorest schools, but this change actually doubles the financial cost that will be incurred by high poverty districts.

School and library demand for E-Rate support has far exceeded the available funding for almost 20 years, but the FCC Chairman has determined that the program's historically insufficient funding level can be stretched further by eliminating existing services for America's schools, while requiring them to pay more for other services.

By ignoring input from the intended beneficiaries and attempting major reform on the cheap, the upcoming E-Rate modernization plan may make support for this successful program obsolete.

Teacher Residency Program Launched

Denver Public Schools wants to invest in the next generation of teachers while they are still earning an undergraduate teaching degree.

The district recently announced the Denver Student Teacher Residency, a partnership with Metropolitan State University at Denver and the University of Colorado at Denver to provide an intensive residency experience for college seniors working toward a bachelor's degree and teaching license. Students will have the opportunity to become teacher residents in Denver Public Schools for a full year under the mentorship of a master teacher.

The program aims to aid in the transition from college student to becoming a first-year teacher. The partnership connects students to veteran Denver teachers, who will provide professional support, mentorship and feedback.

After their first year of residency, students will receive priority hiring through Denver Public Schools.

With 50 percent of Denver new teachers exiting the teaching profession within their first five years, district officials hope the program will result in more successful new teachers and increased teacher retention.

"This program will provide us with a unique opportunity," said Tom Boasberg, Denver Public Schools superintendent, "to work hand-in-hand with our university partners to 'grow our own' within the context of our diverse classrooms so that we can meet our shared goals for student growth and learning."

The new student residency program is modeled after the success of Denver Teacher Residency, a program that provides a pipeline for professionals in other industries to pursue a career in teaching while earning a master's degree from the University of Denver. More than 200 teachers in hard-to-fill teaching positions such as math and special education have been hired through the program.

Cleveland Student Surprised at Prom

The prom turned out to be quite a night for Yu Zhang, a senior at Lincoln-West High School in Cleveland. It was at the prom where Zhang found out he was the recipient of a \$10,000 college scholarship, presented to him by Denise Link, chair of Cleveland Metropolitan School District's school board.

Zhang was one of 30 students to compete for the scholarship, which Link received last year to give to a student after winning the nation's top urban education leadership award—the Green-Garner Award—at the Council of the Great City Schools' 57th Annual Fall Conference in Albuquerque. The award is sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK Education and Voyager/ Sopris Learning.

Zhang, 17, is originally from Fuzhou, China, and arrived in Cleveland near the

end of his eighth-grade year. After attending Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy in his freshman year, he completed his final three years at Lincoln High.

Zhang is Lincoln High's salutatorian and will attend Ohio State University, where he plans to study engineering.

In addition to being deserving academically, Link said that Zhang has a real need for financial aid, since his family consists of only him and

his widowed mother, who is an unskilled worker.

"At the end of the interview, he told me, 'Education is the only way out for me,'" Link said. "...I am truly humbled and honored to be able to help Yu on his path to success."



Cleveland student Yu Zhang, second from left, holds his \$10,000 oversized check and congratulated by, left to right, his mom, school board chair Denise Link and principal Irene Javier.

Character Education Programs

Earn North Carolina District High Marks

Promising practices in character education to help develop good character in young people have earned Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, N.C., high marks.

The Washington, D.C.-based Character Education Partnership (CEP) recently handed out 315 promising practices awards to schools, districts and youth-serving organizations in the United States, Canada, China, Greece and Mexico.

Sixteen of the 315 awards recognized schools and programs in North Carolina's Guilford County Schools in Greensboro.

The promising practices awards showcase innovative best practices in character education. The winning practices in the Guilford County district's schools and programs include unique anti-bullying programs, creative ways to integrate character and academic subjects, effective strategies

for developing student leadership, and activities that build community support.

Recognition was also given to other urban-school programs in districts such as St. Louis and New York City.

Miami Principal Receives Top Honor

Adrienne Leal is the principal of Coral Reef Senior High School in Miami, which has been recognized by the College Board for having the largest number of African American and Hispanic students succeed in Advanced Placement classes. And in 2013, the school was ranked No. 13 in *U.S. News and World Report's* Best High Schools.

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Black Male continued from page 1

When he returned home, Davis immediately recruited 10 black males from Lincoln to serve as mentors and then visited the principal of nearby Crispus Attucks Elementary School to ask her to recommend 10 black boys in 4th grade who could benefit from mentoring. Davis chose Attucks because it was the only elementary school in the Kansas City school district that had no male students advancing to the highly selective Lincoln.

The mentoring sessions were held twice weekly after school during the 2012-2013 school year. In addition to providing academic support, mentors built one-on-one relationships with their mentees.

“We wanted to show these kids that education is important, especially in this

Miami Principal continued from page 11

In recognition of her efforts, Leal was named the 2014 National Principal of the Year by the Magnet Schools of America organization. The selection was based on demonstrated excellence in such areas as promoting equity and diversity among students and staff.

community where kids don't always get one-on-one at home because of drugs, gangs and illegal activity,” wrote Derrick Parker Jr., who served as a mentor and wrote about his experience in a \$5,000 college scholarship application he applied for and won. “I feel like everyone needs a support system. I wanted to be that for them.”

The mentoring program was a success, with the elementary students improving their math and reading skills. And Davis, who is now the senior director of school leadership for the Kansas City school system, plans to expand the *Each One, Teach One* program.

“This program was not only beneficial to the mentees, who spent quality time with positive role models, but also to the mentors who had an opportunity to make a positive impact,” said Davis. “So in my current role, I'm going to work on getting the program into all of our high schools.”

And for Council Research Director Ray Hart, the *Each One, Teach One* program is exactly what the Council had in mind when it conceived the summit.

“We envisioned the lessons learned would lead to programs such as this one, changing the lives of students in our urban districts,” said Hart.

Council Fall Conference Registration Begins

The Council of the Great City Schools will hold its 58th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 22-26, in Milwaukee.

Hosted by Milwaukee Public Schools, the conference will feature more than 850 big-city school superintendents, board members, senior administrators and college deans of education who will assemble at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center to discuss initiatives to improve the quality of education for children in urban schools.

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.

