



- New D.C. Leader, **p.4**
- Top High Schools, **p.7**
- New Day in Omaha, **p.9**

**LEGISLATIVE**

- Funding Boost in Progress, **p.10**

Graduation Edition



Boston Mayor Thomas Menino introduces Carol Johnson as the next superintendent of the Boston school system at a press conference.

## New Leaders Named in Cities From Boston To San Francisco

Several big-city school districts will begin the upcoming 2007-2008 school year with new leadership, including the nation's oldest public school system, Boston Public Schools.

Boston recently selected veteran educator Carol Johnson to take the reins of the 57,000-student school system from Superintendent Michael Contompasis, who succeeded Thomas Payzant after he resigned from the district in June 2006 following 11 years at the helm.

In 2003, Johnson was named the superintendent of the Memphis City Schools, the largest school district in Tennessee with 115,000 students. During her tenure before recently accepting Boston's offer, academic achievement improved and

**New Leaders** continued on page 3

## Hardship Doesn't Stop Iraqi Student from Earning a Diploma

Enduring a new culture and the death of her father, Iraqi native Reyam Ali lived in Jordan, and then Syria, before finally moving to the United States.

Shortly after arriving in the U.S., her father, a photographer, journalist and poet, died tragically in 2001, leaving her mother, a teacher, to provide for the family in a different country and culture.



Reyam Ali

Ali could not speak English when she started Jane Long Middle School in Houston. "It was hard because I couldn't communicate with anyone,"

she said in her high school newspaper.

She never again returned to see her family in Iraq. But with ambition and hard work, she adapted to the American environment, and in May graduated from the Houston Independent School District's Bellaire High School.

Aspiring to be a physician, Ali has done volunteer work at a local Houston hospital. "I really enjoy helping people and I want to make a difference in the world," Ali said in the *Bellaire Examiner*. "I want to make my father and mom proud."

She is headed for the University of Houston this fall.

## Council Denounces High Court Ruling

The Council of the Great City Schools denounced the U.S. Supreme Court's June 28 ruling striking down student assignment plans in Louisville and Seattle designed to promote racial diversity in their public schools.

"Today's troubling decision will make it harder for these and other cities to maintain an integrated student body, prevent racial resegregation, improve academic performance, and build a more equitable and competitive America," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "The ruling now forbids school systems across

**High Court** continued on page 7

## Spreading the Wealth



Atlanta Superintendent Beverly Hall poses with graduating student Tiara Smith after both received honors. Story on page 5.

# Rochester School Leads City Effort in 'Cell Phones for Soldiers' Program

When JoAnne Liberti, a teacher at Kodak Park School No. 41 in Rochester, N.Y., found out that her grandson was being deployed to Afghanistan, she wanted to do something to support him and the rest of the soldiers.

As a result, Kodak Park School is now helping provide free long-distance service for soldiers in the armed forces.

The school has become a collection site for the "Cell Phones for Soldiers" program, which recycles used cell phones and accessories for cash. The proceeds are used to purchase pre-paid calling cards for U.S. service individuals overseas.

There are approximately 5,000 collection sites across the country, with Kodak Park School being the first in Rochester. Since October, the school has collected more than 800 cell phones.

Liberti's grandson, Brandon Randolph, is serving in Afghanistan with the Army's

10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, and while he was in high school, he volunteered at Kodak Park School and developed strong relationships with the staff.

"Since everyone at school knew Brandon, I thought they might be willing to join the cell phone program and become a collection site," said Liberti in an interview with the school district's newsletter, *Students First*. "Our principal... and our staff embraced the opportunity and it took off from there."

The school has also broadened its outreach to the community with the support from the Rochester Fire Department and local company Paychex. The fire department provides public drop-off locations, while Paychex provides locations for its employees.

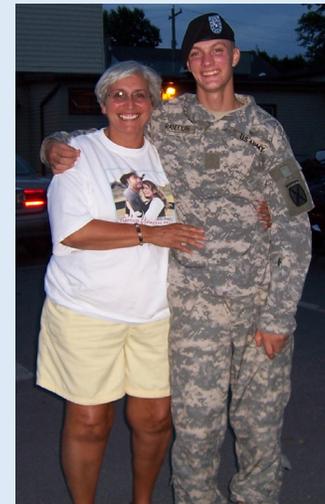
The cell phones and accessories are collected periodically and taken to the

school, which packages the items and ships them for recycling.

The "Cell Phones for Soldiers" Program has raised more than \$1 million nationwide and more than 75,000 pre-paid calling cards have been sent to U.S. troops throughout the world.

**"Our principal...and our staff embraced the opportunity and it took off from there..."**

—JoAnne Liberti, Kodak Park School teacher



Rochester teacher JoAnne Liberti with grandson Brandon Randolph who is serving in Afghanistan.



**Executive Director**  
Michael Casserly

**Editor**  
Henry Duvall  
hduvall@cgcs.org

**Associate Editor**  
Tonya Harris  
tharris@cgcs.org

**Council officers**

**Chair**  
Carol Comeau  
Superintendent, Anchorage

**Chair-elect**  
William Isler  
Board Member, Pittsburgh

**Secretary-Treasurer**  
Carol Johnson  
Superintendent, Memphis

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

Albuquerque	Chicago	East Baton Rouge	Louisville	Oklahoma City	St. Louis
Anchorage	Christina	Fort Worth	Memphis	Omaha	St. Paul
Atlanta	Cincinnati	Fresno	Miami-Dade	Orange Co.	Salt Lake City
Austin	Clark Co.	Greensboro	Milwaukee	Palm Beach	San Diego
Baltimore	Cleveland	Houston	Minneapolis	Philadelphia	San Francisco
Birmingham	Columbus	Indianapolis	Nashville	Pittsburgh	Seattle
Boston	Dallas	Jackson	Newark	Portland	Shreveport
Broward Co.	Dayton	Jacksonville	New Orleans	Providence	Tampa
Buffalo	Denver	Kansas City	New York City	Richmond	Toledo
Charleston	Des Moines	Long Beach	Norfolk	Rochester	Washington DC
Charlotte	Detroit	Los Angeles	Oakland	Sacramento	Wichita

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)

**New Leaders** *continued from page 1*

the district launched a mantra called “Every Child. Every Day. College Bound.,” an initiative to encourage all students to pursue a post-secondary education.

In addition, for the first time since *No Child Left Behind* standards were instituted in 2001, the Memphis school district was declared to be in “good standing” by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Johnson, who was named the state superintendent of the year by the Tennessee Parent Teacher Association earlier this year, had led the Minneapolis Public Schools prior to her Memphis tenure.

She is scheduled to take the reins of the Boston school district in late August.

Also selecting a new superintendent recently was Baltimore City Public Schools, which chose a leader from the nation’s largest school system.

Andrés Alonso, the deputy chancellor of teaching and learning for New York City public schools, will become the CEO of the 82,000-student school system in Baltimore, succeeding interim CEO Charlene Cooper Boston.

Alonso, who holds the No. 2 position in the New York City school district, was born in Cuba and worked as a lawyer before becoming a teacher in Newark public schools where he taught special education and English language learners. He also wrote the district’s bilingual special education curriculum guide and the English as a Second Language curriculum guide.



Andrés Alonso

“All students can learn, and we will demonstrate that they can,” said Alonso in a news release.

San Francisco Unified School District also chose a longtime educator to lead its 60,000-student school system with the recent selection of Carlos Garcia.



Carlos Garcia

Garcia is a former superintendent of the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, the fastest growing district in the nation with 280,000 students. He was also the superintendent of California’s Fresno Unified School District.

He is no stranger to the San Francisco school system, having served as a principal of a district middle school.

“We chose Mr. Garcia because of his past experience with San Francisco, his strong track record as a superintendent and his understanding of the challenges that our district faces,” said San Francisco Board President Mark Sanchez in a news statement.

In Oklahoma City, the school district selected John Porter, the deputy superintendent for Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland, to lead the public schools.



John Porter

Porter, who has a law degree and was president of a technology company, succeeds interim superintendent Linda Brown, who has led the Oklahoma City district for 10 months.

“John is the right person at the right time, and his broad experience in law, business and education will be of great value in his new position with our district,” said Board Chairman Cliff Hudson in a press release.

When Eugene Sanders left Ohio’s Toledo Public Schools to become superinten-



John Foley

dent of the Cleveland Municipal School District, John Foley was named the interim leader.

The 30,000-student school system has now decided to give the top job permanently to Foley.

Foley began his career with the district as a junior high school teacher and has served the district in several other capacities, including assistant superintendent of school improvement and reform and chief of staff.

In Louisville, Ky., Sheldon Berman, superintendent of Hudson Public Schools in Massachusetts, takes the helm of the Jefferson County Public Schools. He succeeds Stephen Daeschner, who had led the district since 1993 until recently, when he took the reins of the Indian Prairie School District in Aurora, Ill.

### **District Interim Leaders Named**

The School District of Philadelphia recently chose a retired U.S. Army officer to become the interim superintendent.

Thomas Brady, the district’s chief operation officer, will succeed Paul Vallas, who left the Philadelphia school system after five years to head the state-run Recovery School District in New Orleans.

Oregon’s Portland Public Schools also named an interim superintendent to replace Vicki Phillips, who is leaving the district to work at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the director of education.

Ed Schmitt, the superintendent of Oregon’s Multnomah Education Service District, a public agency which provides programs and services to eight school districts, will serve as the district’s interim leader. He previously served as the school system’s director of personnel before leading the Multnomah district.

**New Leaders** *continued on page 4*

## Mayor Takes Control of D.C. Schools

The nation's capital will now follow in the footsteps of New York City, Boston and Chicago—cities with mayors controlling the public school systems.

Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty recently assumed authority of the District of Columbia Public Schools. And in his first official act, he named a chancellor to lead the 55,000-student school district.

Stating that “there is nothing more important than the education of our children,” Fenty selected Michelle Rhee, the founder of a nonprofit organization which works to



Michelle Rhee

recruit and train teachers for urban school systems, as the head of D.C. schools.

Rhee taught for three years as a teacher in Baltimore city schools and in 1997 founded the New Teacher Project.

The organization has recruited approximately 23,000 teachers and works with more than 200 school districts, including the D.C. school system.

At a press conference announcing her appointment, Rhee said she has dedicated her career to improving public education in urban communities.

“...I believe there is a unique opportunity to effect significant systemic change in the District of Columbia to ensure that all children in this city get an excellent education,” said Rhee.

She succeeds Clifford Janey, who has been at the helm of the district since September 2004.

In addition to hiring and firing the school chancellor, Fenty will also be responsible for overseeing the district's \$2.3 billion school modernization plan. He will share control of the school system's operating budget with the D.C. Council.

The D.C. Board of Education will now serve a reduced role and instead of setting policy for the district, it will oversee standardized testing and teacher certification.

In April, Fenty's school takeover plan was approved by the D.C. Council but in order to go into effect, Congress and President Bush had to sign an amendment to the city's Home Rule charter that removes power from the Board of Education and places it in the hands of the mayor.

Once this was completed, the mayor, who has been in office since January, was able to assume authority of the school system on June 12.

## Salt Lake City, San Diego Win Intel Awards

Two urban elementary schools—Balboa in San Diego and Escalante in Salt Lake City—were recently presented with awards for implementing innovative math and science programs.

Sponsored by the Intel Foundation, the 2007 Intel Schools of Distinction Awards honor one elementary, one middle school and one high school in two categories: mathematics and science.

Balboa Elementary was honored for its elementary school math curriculum, a rigorous, challenging and engaging program that teaches students mathematics skills and how to apply them to solve real-life problems.

The school is located in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood and its student population is predominantly Hispanic, with students from Central Asia and Africa also in attendance.

One of the reasons the school received the prize was because of its record of improvement over the last five years. In 2002, only 51 students scored at the proficient or advanced level on the math portion of a state exam, compared with 175 students in 2006.

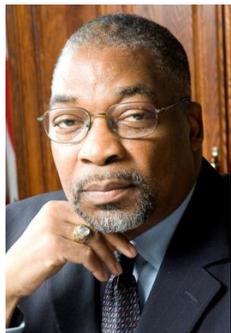
Salt Lake City's Escalante School won the Schools of Distinction Award for its strong science curriculum, which actively engages students in exploring, debating and discussing what they are learning. The school places a heavy emphasis on science and maintains an outdoor classroom on site where students can go to study wetlands, plants and animals and many other topics related to the science curriculum.

The recipients of the Schools of Distinction Awards receive a \$10,000 grant as well as curriculum materials, professional development resources, hardware and software worth more than \$160,000.

**New Leaders** continued from page 3

### Contract Extension

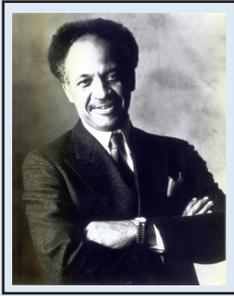
Buffalo Public Schools recently decided to retain its top leader, approving a contract extension through July 2011 for Superintendent James Williams, who has led the district since 2005.



James Williams

Under Williams, student enrollment in the district has stabilized after years of decline, a new academic achievement plan has been introduced offering students a rigorous curriculum, Advanced Placement courses have been

established in every high school and the district has formed a partnership with the University of Buffalo to increase the number of students who graduate. Before going to Buffalo, Williams was the deputy superintendent of schools in Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland. He also served as superintendent of Ohio's Dayton Public Schools, where he received the Council of the Great City Schools' Richard R. Green Award, presented to the nation's top urban educator.



## Richard R. Green Outstanding Educator

Fond of having children recite,  
*"If you believe it, you can achieve it, If it is to be, it's up to me."*

## Atlanta Superintendent Shares Honor With Graduating Student

Award-winning Superintendent Beverly Hall of the Atlanta Public Schools recently shared an honor bestowed upon her with a graduating senior in the Class of 2007.

She presented a \$10,000 scholarship that she received from winning the nation's top prize for urban education leadership, the Richard R. Green Award, to Therrell High School senior Tiara Lavette Smith, a scholar-athlete.

In October, Hall was named the 2006 Richard R. Green Award winner and presented the scholarship for a student of her choice by the Council of the Great City Schools and ARAMARK, a food and facility services company. The award is named for the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system.

"I am delighted to present this scholarship to Tiara Smith, a brilliant student who personifies all that we at Atlanta Public Schools want our graduates to be: intelligent, articulate and highly personable, with a strong sense of personal responsibility and commitment to community service," Superintendent Hall stressed.

Smith will be attending Emory University in Atlanta this fall as a Benjamin E. Mays Scholar, taking a double major in psychology and neuroscience.

An honor student, Smith was president of the Therrell Student Government Association, a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholar, a peer tutor, yearbook photographer and co-captain of the girls varsity basketball and volleyball teams.

## Black Male Graduates Receive Support From Former Norfolk School Board Member

Continuing to help African-American male students enroll in college, former Norfolk, Va., school board member Anna Dodson has awarded her second scholarship to a graduating senior in Norfolk Public Schools.

She received a \$10,000 scholarship to present to a deserving student of her choice when the Council of the Great City Schools and ARAMARK Education bestowed upon her the 2005 Richard R. Green Award, the nation's highest honor for urban school leadership.

Rather than give the \$10,000 scholarship to one student, Dodson wanted to spread the \$10,000 to four students over four years, giving each a \$2,500 scholarship to inspire and motivate African-American male students to excel.

She recently gave her second \$2,500 Green scholarship to Milton Greene IV, who recently graduated from Norfolk's Norview High School to attend Hampton University. He plans to major in architecture.

## Council Scholarship Helps Collegian Become Engineer



Stanley Artis Jr.

Four years ago, Stanley Artis Jr. graduated from a Norfolk, Va., high school with a scholarship to help pay for college. Today, he thanks the benefactors of the scholarship as he recently graduated

from Old Dominion University.

He received a \$10,000 scholarship from his school district's superintendent, John Simpson, who had been awarded the nation's top prize for urban education leadership, the Richard R. Green Award, in 2002.

The former Norfolk Public Schools superintendent had received the award and scholarship to give to a graduating senior of his choice from the Council of the Great City Schools and ARAMARK, a food and facility services company.

Artis took advantage of the scholarship at Old Dominion, where in May he graduated with a job waiting for him as an electrical engineer at Northrop Grumman's Submarine Combat and Electronic Systems.

Reflecting on the scholarship and job offer, Artis pointed out, "I guess you can say that I am just blessed with opportunities, or some people will say I am just lucky. I think I am blessed because these things do not just happen overnight or as a coincidence."

## Black, Latino Male Students Get Support In Boston's '10 Boys' Clubs

Black and Latino boys in Boston Public Schools in need of academic improvement can now join a club created exclusively for them that offers intensive academic, social and emotional support.

The "10 Boys" clubs are comprised of 10 African American or Latino males who performed poorly on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test, which measures students academic performance in English, math, science and history.

The clubs, which were created earlier this year, are operating in every elementary, middle and high school located in Triad A-- a group of 44 schools in the district.

Boys in the club, as well as their principals, teachers and parents, must sign a "student learning contract" affirming the rights and responsibilities involved in participating in the "10 Boys" initiative, which includes learning and behavior goals for each student.

The clubs meet regularly, often before or after school, and in addition to offering tutoring, they provide ongoing monitoring and reporting of the boys' attendance, grades, homework and tests, including personalized success plans.

Parent involvement is a key component of the clubs, with parents receiving weekly telephone calls and school visits updating them on their sons' academic progress.

Individual schools have tailored each "10 Boys" program to the needs and interest of their students. At one elementary school, the gym teacher works closely with the 10 boys once a week on health and fitness, teamwork, anger management and social skills.

Several schools have added a community service component to the program, engaging the boys in school and neighbor-



The young men are participants in the "10 Boys" program at Snowden International High School and call themselves the "Ten Kings."

hood clean-up efforts or other activities to develop leadership and community involvement.

And some schools have given their "10 Boys" club a name to foster a sense of pride, as well as invited guest speakers, including successful African American and Latino men from the community.

The clubs were created by the district to boost the performance of students on the MCAS exam, and while those results will not be known until the fall, the program is already making an impact, according to district officials.

Principals and teachers have noted that boys participating in the program have improved their attendance, behavior and academic performance.

"It's exciting to hear the principals talk about the impact that this initiative is already having on their young men," said Ingrid Carney, the district's deputy superintendent who created the "10 Boys" program. "We are seeing more focus and engagement in class, better attendance and fewer discipline referrals."

## Four Urban Schools Recognized For Significant Change

The World of Inquiry School in Rochester, N.Y., is a K-6 school combining rigorous academic content and real-world projects with active teaching and community service.

The school's theme this year has been "A Community of High Expectations" and striving for high expectations is one reason it was one of four big-city schools to receive the 2007 National School Change Award for significant improvement in student achievement.

Conducted and co-sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Fordham University Graduate School of Education, the awards were presented to six schools across the nation.

In addition to the World of Inquiry School, other urban schools chosen for the award were DreamKeepers Academy in Norfolk, Va.; P.S. 196 in Brooklyn, N.Y.; and Long Beach Unified School District's Signal Hill Elementary in California.

The award recognizes schools that have achieved significant, positive change in school culture over a 3-5 year period and schools are judged based on specific criteria, including the depth of the change and its impact on student achievement.

Approximately 60-100 nominations are received each year, with 24 finalists selected and six winners named by a national panel of judges.

The winning schools receive a \$5,000 grant and the opportunity to participate in a major national research project focusing on school change. The award also includes a presentation by the United States Department of Education at a ceremony in New York City.

## New Leadership Elected to Council

Superintendent Carol Comeau of the Anchorage School District in Alaska became the chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' board of directors July 1.



Carol Comeau

She will preside over the national urban education policy and research organization that represents 66 big-city school systems for a one-year term.

The Council's board is composed of the superintendent and a school board member from each Council district.

Comeau succeeds George Thompson III, a board member of the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools in Tennessee.



William Isler

She leaves the chair-elect position to William Isler, president of the Pittsburgh school board.

Assuming Isler's post as the Council's secretary-treasurer is Superintendent Carol

Johnson, stepping down from Memphis City Schools to lead Boston Public Schools.

Celebrating 50 years of service, the Council is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of America's urban public schools. "Our mission is clear cut: to support the education of the nation's most diverse student body to the highest academic standards," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

## Newsweek Ranks High Schools: Two in Dallas Nation's Best

The Dallas Independent School District's Talented and Gifted Magnet and the School of Science and Engineering ranked No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, in *Newsweek* magazine's recent "America's Best High Schools" edition.

It's the second consecutive year that the Talented and Gifted school has led *Newsweek's* annual list of the nation's top public high schools. The Science and Engineering Magnet moved to No. 2 in 2007 after ranking 8th on the newsmagazine's 2006 list.

"These schools are setting the example for others in both the district and the rest of the nation," said Dallas Schools Superintendent Michael Hinojosa in a news release.

Another big-city public school – Stanton College Preparatory in Jacksonville, Fla. -- ranked No. 3 of *Newsweek's* list of top 1,200 schools in the country.

Of the 10 schools in the "Top of the Class" for 2007, six are in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

Ranked No.5 is Suncoast High School in Florida's School District of Palm Beach County; No. 8 is City Honors School in Buffalo, N.Y.; and No. 10 is the Academic Magnet in North Charleston, S.C.

In Buffalo, Superintendent James Williams noted, "This is a great tribute to the students and staff of City Honors School, and I am thrilled to see that the Buffalo Public Schools can compete with, and surpass, schools that are nationally recognized."

A number of urban schools ranked in the top 100.

*Newsweek* has published its annual list of the nation's best high schools since 1998. Schools are ranked according to the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or Cambridge tests taken by all students at a school and divided by the number of graduating seniors.

### High Court Ruling *continued from page 1*

the nation from using the same strategies that the federal courts once ordered them to implement."

The Council had filed an *amicus* brief in the Supreme Court supporting the school districts in Louisville and Seattle, which are members of the group.

"The Council is heartened that a majority of the court reaffirms that there is a compelling interest in achieving diversity in public school classrooms, and that race-conscious strategies can be consistent with the Constitution," Casserly pointed out. "As a practical matter, however, the court has left school districts across the land

with few viable alternatives for using race in pursuit of that interest. School districts now have even fewer options to achieve the racial diversity that was possible before the decision.

"Therefore, the Council decries the court's ruling in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* and *Crystal D. Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* as a deliberate and pronounced step backwards in the nation's long march toward racial equality," he stressed.

The Council views the Bush Administration's stance in promoting the Supreme Court's outcome as deplorable.

## Two Florida Graduates Earned Diplomas Despite Enormous Odds

While most students begin their senior year of high school with thoughts of year-



Ryan Snow

book photos and class rings, Florida student Ryan Snow had other things on his mind: battling cancer.

Snow was a student at Apopka High School in Orlando's Orange County School District, when he was diagnosed last year with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer of the immune system.

In order to treat the cancer, he had to undergo chemotherapy. In fact, he remembers the exact day he started the treatments. "It was my birthday, August 17," said Snow in an interview with the *Urban Educator*.

Because he would be undergoing grueling chemotherapy, school administrators offered him the chance to complete his senior year in a home study program.

But Snow did a surprising thing and told them no.

"I felt like I needed the high school experience, especially because I was a senior," recalled Snow. "It just was really important for me to attend classes."

The chemotherapy treatments not only caused his hair to fall out but made him extremely tired. In addition, he was taking a heavy course load: AP English, AP psychology, physics, government and economics. Yet, he missed very few days of school, even though at times he would be sitting in class nauseous from the chemotherapy.

"It would've been really easy for me to stay in bed a lot of days, but I had the motivation to succeed," said Snow. He also credits his teachers, who were very supportive and helped him from falling behind.

And despite his illness, Snow even found the time to participate in an extra-

**Florida Graduates** continued on page 12

## Council Holds Meeting On Bilingual, Immigrant Education

Some 51 officials from 28 urban school districts around the nation participated in the Council of the Great City Schools' recent meeting of bilingual, immigrant and refugee education directors in Miami.

It marked the launch of an annual conference that will focus on ways to improve the education of English language learners in the nation's urban public schools.

The meeting covered effective instruction, assessment and evaluation, systemic approaches to instruction, and capacity building for teaching and learning, and adolescent newcomers, as well as federal legislative activities, and a proposed study by the Council on English language learner programs.

The Council plans to undertake activities around some of the challenges that surfaced during the meeting, such as:

- Investigating what instructional practices work to improve academic achievement of English language learners; and
- Compiling information on the challenges and needs of English language learners in secondary education, especially adolescent newcomers.

The meeting featured nationally recognized experts on the education of English language learners, including Kenji Hakuta, professor of education at Stanford University, and Aida Walqui, director of the teacher professional development program at WestEd.



**Council of the Great City Schools**  
Annual Fall Conference  
October 31- November 4, 2007



## Newark Mayor is Principal for a Day

Newark Mayor Cory Booker is all smiles as he is surrounded by children at the Eighteenth Avenue School during Newark Public Schools Annual Principal for a Day event. Booker was invited by Newark Schools Superintendent Marion Bolden to attend the event, which serves as a day in which business, civic and community leaders participate in the day-to-day activities of a school principal while interacting with students and teachers.

## Nebraska Replaces Law Segregating Omaha Public Schools

The Nebraska legislature in May voted to replace a state law passed a year ago that would have divided the culturally diverse Omaha school district into three racially isolated separate districts.

The new law helps the Omaha Public Schools and neighboring school districts work together on finance, achievement and integration.

It creates a “learning community” for pooling property tax revenue across a two-county area based on an equity formula. And it permits open enrollment throughout a two-county area, requiring a diversity plan designed to have all schools reflect the socioeconomic diversity of the learning community.

The legislation also creates a learning community coordinating council that has been given oversight to collect the common levy and implement the diversity plan.

“Overall, the new law is innovative legislation with the potential of serving as a national model to provide financial equity and integrative opportunities to all children in a two-county area,” stressed Omaha Schools Superintendent John Mackiel.

When the law to divide the Omaha school system passed last spring, the Council of the Great City Schools mobilized the NAACP, Rainbow PUSH Coalition, National Urban League, National Council of La Raza and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund to repeal “the blatant effort to resegregate the state’s public schools.”

## Urban Students Named *Ebony* Magazine’s Top Black High School Seniors



Brittne Broach

Before their recent graduations, Brittne Broach, a student in Jackson, Miss., had a 4.15 grade point average, and plans to pursue a double major in accounting and business administration. And another Jackson student, Kareah Christian, had a 3.62 GPA and plans to study elementary education in college.

These are just two of the 16 urban school students featured in *Ebony* magazine’s “2007 Top High School Seniors” spread.

The June issue of the magazine profiled 20 African American students across the nation who graduated at the top of their class.

The students featured were not only celebrated for their academic achievements, but also for excelling outside the classroom.

Broach, who attended Jackson’s Bailey Magnet High School, said she values education. “Education is the master key in one’s life,” she said in an interview with *Ebony*. “Without education, a person has limited access to vast opportunities in life.”

Christian, a student at Jim Hill High School, said one of her life goals is to become a teacher.

In addition to Broach and Christian, the magazine highlighted urban students in Dallas, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Chicago, Orlando, Detroit, Atlanta, Columbus, Oklahoma City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Boston and Memphis.



Kareah Christian



The winning members of the 2007 U.S. Academic Decathlon from El Camino Real High School display their championship award.

## L.A. Wins Fourth Straight Academic Decathlon

El Camino Real High School recently won the 2007 U.S. Academic Decathlon, marking the fourth time in a row a school in the Los Angeles Unified School District has won the top prize.

The decathlon competition is a two-day event, which challenges students on a specific topic. The topic for this year was “China and Its Influence on the World.”

Students are quizzed in several categories: speech, interviews, essay, art, economics, language and literature, mathematics, music, social sciences, and the “Super Quiz,” which involves a written and oral relay.

In the competition, each team consists of students from three different grade-point average (GPA) categories - Varsity, which is a “C” average student; Scholastic, the “B” average student; and the Honor student who has an “A” average.

What teams usually accomplish with nine members, El Camino Real did with only eight. The team competed with one less student due to losing a member earlier in the school year, but the loss did not deter the team. The decathletes scored 52,148 out of 60,000 possible points, which gave the school its fifth national championship since 1998.

This year, approximately 350 students from 39 teams across the nation competed in the decathlon.

## Long-Awaited Boost in Federal Education Funding in Progress

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

Following four consecutive years during which the majority of the nation's school districts have found their *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) funding frozen or cut, preliminary action by the congressional appropriations committees signals a welcome change of fortune. Both the House and Senate appropriations committees have begun their fiscal year 2008 process with some \$2 billion more for elementary and secondary education funding.

The House appropriations subcommittee has reported a \$1.9 billion increase in Title I funding, including a \$1.5 billion boost in Title I's LEA grants and a \$375 million increase in school improvement funds. The Senate appropriations committee has proposed a \$1.45 billion increase for Title I, including \$1.1 billion more for LEA grants and a \$375 million expansion of school improvement funds.

The House subcommittee has also recommended increases of \$300 million in Title II teacher quality programs, \$105 million more for English language learner programs, and \$125 million more for 21<sup>st</sup> Century After School pro-



grams. The panel has proposed an increase of only \$174 million for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, however. In the Senate committee, IDEA is slated for a \$457 million increase, while Title II, Title III, and After School programs have been essentially frozen.

If Congress can resolve these and other differences later this year in favor of the higher amounts in each legislative body, educational services for disadvantaged, minority, and language minority children, as well as children with disabilities should benefit substantially.

Despite continuing budget constraints, the outlook for higher federal education funding has improved in the new 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. The Bush Administration, however, has threatened to veto the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill because it exceeds its budget proposal. Progress is being made, but the fight to invest more in public education and other key domestic programs is far from over.

## 'No Senior Left Behind' Program Works in Birmingham

Birmingham City School System Superintendent Stan Mims began a program called "No Senior Left Behind" in February to help juniors and seniors pass the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, which students must pass in order to graduate.

Students participated in weekend tutoring sessions.

District officials were thrilled this spring

when they learned that 95 percent of the seniors who participated in the program passed the graduation exam and graduated on time.

The district began phase II of the program in June with a session at which U.S. Rep. Artur Davis, D-Ala., gave a motivational talk to rising seniors.

The second phase will focus not only on preparing students to pass the graduation

exam but on college preparation tests like the ACT. Seniors also will be taken on college tours.

"Senior year is about saying good-bye, but we also want the students to remember that the celebration is about more than leaving high school," said Superintendent Mims. "It's about moving forward to the next level of academics. We want them to understand that going to college will open many doors."

## Two Las Vegas Students Named Among Nation's Top 10 Youth Volunteers

Former foster child Heather Wilder, 13, of Las Vegas, Nev., wrote a series of 10 booklets to help foster children understand and cope with some of the same experiences she once endured.

Another Las Vegas student, Mollie Singer, 18, who was diagnosed with diabetes at age 4, helped



Heather Wilder

raise more than \$100,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

What do both of these students have in common other than being from the same region?

Both were recently named among America's top 10 youth volunteers in the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

Wilder, a student at Ernest Becker Middle School, received help from her new mother and another former foster child in developing the booklets, which were supported by a grant from the City of Las Vegas.



Mollie Singer

Subsequently, the booklets were distributed through various state channels, including the Department of Child and Family Services.

"I am so glad I am not in foster care anymore," she said. "But I am mind-

ful of what it means, and I am more than happy to help another foster child get to the point where they can experience what a childhood should really be like."

The nation's 10 top youth volunteers received \$5,000 cash awards and \$5,000 grants from the Prudential Foundation for charities of their choice.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program is conducted by Prudential Financial, Inc. in partnership with the

National Association of Secondary School Principals. It's supported by several national education, youth and service organizations, including the Council of the Great City Schools.

## Baltimore Students Awarded \$10,000 Scholarships

Ten students in Baltimore will find paying for college has become a little easier after the students were recently named the winners of a \$10,000 college scholarship.

Funded by the Pepsi Bottling Group, Inc., the first-time scholarships were presented to 10 students from Baltimore City Public Schools who were members of the graduating class of 2007.

Each year until 2010, ten college-bound seniors will be awarded \$10,000 scholarships to attend a Maryland college of their choice. The awards will be administered in increments of \$2,500 annually, based on the student's good academic standing.

In order to be eligible for the scholarship, students had to meet the following criteria: graduate in the same year as the award from a Baltimore City public high school; have a GPA of at least 2.5; have verifiable community service; and proof of acceptance from a community college, four-year institution, or technical school within the state of Maryland.

"Too often students are faced with financial obstacles that overshadow their dreams," said Baltimore Schools interim CEO Charlene Boston in a press release. "We are excited about the wonderful opportunity to increase the number of college-bound students from Baltimore City."

## Chicago School Receives International Education Prize

Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago has exchange programs with schools in China, France, Morocco, Japan, Chile and South Africa. And through its distance learning lab, it is able to host international videoconferences with experts around the world.

Payton's efforts to teach its students about international cultures is the reason the school was recently awarded the 2006 Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education.

The \$25,000 prize was presented by the Asia Society and The Goldman Sachs Foundation to one secondary school in the nation that teaches its students about international affairs through its curriculum and through partnerships with other countries.

Students at Payton are able to enroll in a four-year course of study in Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish or Latin and have the opportunity to participate in homestay exchanges with a sister school abroad. Before traveling abroad, students take a semester-long seminar on the culture, politics and history of the country.

The school is also home to the Confucius Institute in Chicago, an educational resource for teachers, parents and students throughout the Chicago area on the teaching of the Chinese language and culture. An initiative of the Chinese Ministry of Education, the institute serves as a resource library with more than 3,000 print and media materials.

"Our vision is to give all of our students the rigorous global education that prepares them to be leaders in Chicago, in our nation and in the world," said Chicago Schools CEO Arne Duncan, who along with Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, has championed the globalization of education for Chicago students. "Payton is a shining example of where our Chicago Public Schools are headed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

## Great City Grads



**David Brewer**

**Superintendent of the Los Angeles  
Unified School District**

**1963 graduate**

**Jones High School**

**Orange County Public Schools**

**(Orlando, FL)**

**Florida Graduates** *continued from page 8*

curricular activity as a member of the Business Professionals of America.

Snow completed his chemotherapy treatments in December, and in May, he graduated with his senior class.

“I remember walking across the stage and my English teacher shaking my hand, saying it was a miracle,” said Snow.

His cancer is in remission, and in the fall, he will attend Valencia Community College and pursue an associate’s degree in psychology.

“I’m definitely thankful to be alive and I’m a lot stronger in my religion,” said Snow. “It was tough, but I did it.”

Another student who has defied the odds is Moise Civil, a student at Orlando’s Evans High School. Civil was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in his recent graduating class.

However, four years ago he found himself in far different circumstances. When he was in ninth grade, he moved to Orlando from Haiti. The teenager barely spoke English but didn’t let his unfamiliarity with the language stop him from achieving his goals.

In his junior year, Civil earned As in his honors chemistry and honors geometry classes. And in his senior year, he was

placed in an Advanced Placement calculus class by mistake. When the error was discovered, Civil asked school administrators if he could remain in the class and managed to pass the course with flying colors.

In addition to being a top student, Civil plays the trombone and participated in several after-school activities.

A local television station recently profiled Civil and his inspiring story.

“First, I have to thank the teachers, because without the teachers I would not be here; and second, I’m a little self-motivated,” said Civil in an interview with Central Florida News 13. “That’s like a great strength of mine. I motivate myself to do better in any situation.”

Civil will take his motivation to the University of Florida this fall where he will major in engineering.

## Editor’s Note

*Love Joyner now writes for the Urban Educator as an intern. She is pursuing her undergraduate degree in speech communications at Morgan State University in Baltimore.*



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

PRESORT  
First Class  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Washington, D.C.  
Permit No.251