



- New in Newark **p.3**
- Dan Rather Returns **p. 7**
- Impact of War, **p.10**

Palm Beach Schools Top in the Nation! - Newsweek



#1 in Florida and Eastern US - Suncoast High
Three of Top 100 in US, Nine of Top 5% in US

With the No. 3 ranked high school in the nation, Florida's Palm Beach County school system displays this banner in its board room and on its web site.

Newsweek Ranks Urban Schools At 'Top of Class'

Four of the nation's top five public high schools hail from school districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools, according to *Newsweek* magazine's recent "Top of the Class" issue.

Dallas' Talented and Gifted Magnet ranked No. 2, followed by Palm Beach's Suncoast Community (No. 3), Dallas' Science/Engineering Magnet (No. 4) and Jacksonville's Stanton College Prep (No. 5) behind No. 1 BASIS Charter school in Tucson, Ariz., a non-Council member school.

In Florida's School District of Palm Beach County, officials are so proud of Suncoast Community High School because it has steadily increased its *Newsweek* rank each year from 7th to 5th and to 3rd this year. It is a big high school with a large African-American student population, and is closing the racial achievement gap with high-level courses, says Nat Harrington, a district spokesman.

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.

Other urban schools in districts represented by the Council that ranked in the top 20 were:

- Academic Magnet in North Charleston, S.C. (No. 7);
- Paxon School for Advanced Studies in Jacksonville, Fla. (No. 8);
- City Honors in Buffalo (No. 11);
- Northside College Prep in Chicago (No. 14);
- Highland Park in Dallas (No. 15); and
- Coral Reef in Miami (No. 19)

Some 35 schools in Council districts ranked among *Newsweek's* top 100 public high schools in the country, located in Greensboro, N.C., Nashville, Boston, Tampa, New Orleans, Charlotte, Oklahoma City, Los Angeles, Austin, Fort Worth, San Francisco, Cincinnati, San Diego and Washington, D.C., as well as those named in the best of 20.

Million-Dollar Scholar In Charlotte



Marlin Holmes gives the valedictorian speech at his graduation.

Even at a young age, Marlin Holmes always dreamed of being a world-renowned inventor.

A 2008 graduate of North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools,

Holmes was

encouraged by his parents to go to college. Yet, with his family struggling to raise four children, Holmes knew he would have to find a way to pay for college himself.

"I decided long ago that I would find a way to make my dream happen and I would get a full scholarship to the school of my choice," says Holmes.

The Charlotte student's dream is now a reality. Holmes was awarded more than a million dollars in scholarships, including the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship, which covers full tuition, room, board, books and all other expenses to any college or university.

He will use the scholarship to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering. Holmes would like to develop new, environmentally friendly types of propulsion or new sources of energy that could slow global warming.

Million-Dollar Scholar continued on page 5

Three Urban Students Win Richard R. Green College Scholarships

John Casper, a recent graduate of the Boston Public Schools, would like to pursue a career as a high school history teacher and one day teach at his high school alma mater.

He is one step closer to his goal after receiving a \$10,000 Richard R. Green Scholarship from Elizabeth Reilinger, the chairperson of the Boston School Committee.

Last year, Reilinger was the winner of the Richard R. Green Award, the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership.

The award is named in honor of the first African-American leader of New York City schools, who had also headed public schools in Minneapolis, and is sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools, ARAMARK and Voyager Expanded Learning. The Green Award is presented every year at the Council's annual fall conference.

As the recipient of the award, Reilinger received a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a 2008 graduate of her choice in the Boston school system.

Casper, graduating from Boston Lat-

in Academy, will use the scholarship to attend Boston College in the fall, where he will major in secondary education and general history.

After receiving his degree, he would like to teach at Boston Latin.

"Over the past six years, I have seen the work that teachers put into educating their students, and I can attest that they are some of the hardest working people."

Casper wrote in his scholarship application, "I now feel that I owe the Boston Public Schools, and teaching for them would be one way of paying them back."

In addition to excelling academically, Casper has been active in extracurricular activities, serving as captain of his school's



Boston Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson, left, and Boston School Committee Chairperson Elizabeth Reilinger congratulate John Casper for winning the Richard R. Green Scholarship.

swim team and a member of the outdoor track team. He also has served as a member of both the South Boston and Mayor's Youth Councils and has volunteered to help the homeless.

Richard R. Green continued on page 6



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

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Newark and Memphis Select Superintendents; Dayton Leader Departs, Sacramento Names Interim Chief



Clifford Janey

Two big-city school districts—New Jersey’s Newark Public Schools and Memphis City Schools—recently selected veteran leaders to take the helm when the new school year begins.

Clifford Janey was chosen as the new superintendent of the 41,000-student school district in Newark, the largest school system in New Jersey. He succeeds Marion Bolden, who recently retired from the district she has led for nine years.

Janey previously was the superintendent of the 55,000-student school system in Washington, D.C., a district he led for three years. During his tenure, he implemented several reforms and initiatives to increase academic achievement.

Prior to becoming the head of D.C. schools, he led New York’s Rochester City Schools for seven years. In 2000, he was elected chairman of the Council of the Great City Schools and also served as a co-chair of the Council’s Task Force on Achievement Gaps, which was launched in 1999 to find strategies to close achievement gaps among students of different racial, ethnic and language backgrounds.

Janey was recently introduced as the new superintendent at a press conference by New Jersey Gov. John Corzine. In 1995, the Newark school system was taken over by the state and as a result, the selection of a new superintendent must be approved by the governor and the state Board of Education.

“I believe in high-performing schools that have universal access to individuals, families and communities,” said Janey at the press conference, according to the *Newark Star-Ledger*.

Memphis Names Leader

Memphis City Public Schools also chose a leader with vast experience in the field of education, with its selection of Kriner Cash to take the reins of the 113,000-student school system. Cash, the chief of accountability and system-wide performance for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, will lead the nation’s 21st largest school system.



Kriner Cash

Cash has 30 years of experience in the field of education, having served as a superintendent of Martha’s Vineyard Public Schools in Massachusetts as well as several positions with Howard University and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

He succeeds Dan Ward, who served as the district’s interim superintendent since August 2007. Prior to Ward, Carol Johnson served as superintendent for three years until leaving to head Boston Public Schools.

Dayton Chief Leaves

After six years leading Ohio’s Dayton Public Schools, Percy Mack is leaving his post to become the superintendent of the Richland One School District in Columbia, S.C. The district is South Carolina’s sixth-largest school system with 24,000 students.

During his tenure at the helm of the Dayton school district, student achievement increased and the district was removed from academic emergency; high school graduation and attendance rates rose; and a bond issue to renovate or rebuild all district schools was overwhelmingly approved in 2002.

Interim Head Named

California’s Sacramento City Unified School District recently named Susan Miller, the district’s associate superintendent, as its interim chief.

A graduate of the 46,000-student school system, Miller has served in the district’s central office, engaged in curriculum and instruction and supervising principals. She succeeds M. Magdalena Carrillo who recently announced her retirement from the district.



Honoring a Leader

After nine years at the helm, Superintendent Marion Bolden of New Jersey’s Newark Public Schools receives a special honor from the Council of the Great City Schools. Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, left, and Communications Director Henry Duvall surprised the retiring urban school leader with the recognition at a recent Newark school board meeting. “We know that you have given this city everything you had and more,” said Casserly. “Your work here, however, extends well beyond the city limits of Newark. It is work that all of us across the country emulate.”

Photo credit: Howard Best

Orlando Student Graduates Despite Hardships



Elease Samms

When Elease Samms began high school in Orlando, Fla., she would always go straight home after school and study to take advantage of the sunlight because her house had no electricity. But when nightfall came, she had to use candles to do her homework.

However, Samms never let hardships stop her from achieving straight “A” grades, and four years later she is on her way to prestigious Cornell University to study architecture.

Samms’ excellent grades not only helped her get into Cornell but also helped her become the valedictorian at Jones High School.

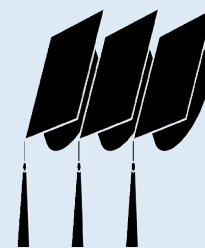
“Elease is my hero because she has accomplished more in this lifetime than most kids ever dream of,” said Jones principal Bridget Williams.

Her remarkable journey began in 2004, when Samms, along with her mother and brother, were evicted from their apartment in Louisiana and moved to Orlando to live in a house owned by Samms’ grandmother. Unbeknown to the family, there was \$1,400 in electricity and water bills that needed to be paid on the house. Samms’ mother worked as a nurse in Louisiana but it would take six months for her to get her license renewed in Florida.

She was able to get a job, but her salary was not enough to pay the water and utility bill and as a result, the family lived for six months without water or electricity. They

Orlando Student continued on page 5

The Class of 2008



Boston Sisters Named Valedictorians

Faith and Chioma Nwaoha are sisters from Nigeria who attended two different high schools in Boston, but they achieved the same goal: graduating first in their class.

According to the district, the two sisters are believed to be the school system’s first-ever sibling valedictorians.

Chioma, 18, was named the valedictorian of English High School and her sister, Faith, who is only 16, was named valedictorian of Jeremiah Burke High School.

The sisters arrived in the United States in 2005 with their parents and two other siblings, and since their arrival they have taken many advanced courses as well as



Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, center, honors sibling valedictorians Chioma Nwaoha, left, and Faith Nwaoha, second from right, at a luncheon, as their parents look on.

participated in community service and school leadership activities. In the fall, Faith will be a pre-med student at Boston University majoring in biology and math while Chioma will study biology at Northeastern

University.

The two sisters are very close and often studied together and helped each other achieve academic success.

“I am very happy about the success both my sister and I have achieved,” said Faith in an interview with the *Boston Herald*. “We are paving the way for our younger siblings.”

Former Gang Member Turns Life Around

Four years ago, Hassan Latifalia, a student in Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., used to be a member of a gang led by his older brother. But instead of becoming another dropout statistic, Latifalia changed his life around and is now headed to college to become a physical therapist.

His transformation occurred because of his participation in the Louisville Education and Employment Partnership (LEEP),



Hassan Latifalia is presented with the LEEP Student of the Year award from his mentor Barbara Grumblatt.

Gang Member continued on page 5

Orlando Student *continued from page 4*

had to rely on the kindness of neighbors and on Fridays, if the family had enough money for bus fare, they would ride to the YMCA to take a bath.

The lack of electricity led to Samms using candles to do her homework and study for exams. She studied by candlelight so much that her eyesight deteriorated and she had to wear glasses.

She recalls that during those six months the free lunch provided to her at school was the highlight of her day. But Samms never let her living situation deter her from succeeding academically, managing to maintain straight "A" grades.

She credits many people with helping her to succeed, but specifically singles out her mentor Walt Geiger, a local architect. Geiger took Samms under his wing, visiting her at school every week, taking her to visit new construction sites to teach her what architects do and assisting her with her college applications and portfolios.

In addition to providing mentoring advice, Geiger also helped Samms financially by paying for her ACT and SAT exams and trips to visit colleges.

The 18-year-old was accepted at Penn State University, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Florida, but Cornell University was her first choice.

So she was very excited when she received the acceptance letter in April notifying her that she would be a member of the university's freshman class.

"I have a lot of dreams, a lot of goals in my life and my main one is to go to college and get a degree," said Samms in an interview with television news station WFTV in Orlando, which profiled her story.

Million-Dollar Scholar *continued from page 1*

Holmes graduated with a GPA of 4.53 and was the valedictorian of his graduating class at Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology in Charlotte.

He has received numerous awards, including being designated a National Achievement Scholar, and served as vice president of the National Honor Society

Gang Member *continued from page 4*

a collaborative among the Jefferson County school system, the Metro Louisville government, the Metro United Way and the local Chamber of Commerce.

The mission of LEEP is to help students graduate and successfully transition to post-secondary education or employment.

Latifalia was selected for the program in ninth grade by Barbara Grumblatt, a LEEP career planner at Fern Creek High School. She recruits freshman students who have low test scores and may be in danger of dropping out of school.

Grumblatt took a special interest in Latifalia, who she knew was involved in a gang with his older brother. She met regularly with him and closely monitored his academic progress and attendance.

Grumblatt has noticed a drastic change in Latifalia since she met him four years ago. He disbanded the gang with his brother's help and began to improve his grades and participate in several extra-curricular activities at his high school. He became a peer mediator, captain of the basketball team and a mentor to fifth-grade students at a local elementary school.

"He literally went from a boy to a young man," said Grumblatt. "He is an incredible person who has turned his life around."

In the fall, he will attend a local community college and study physical therapy.

Recently, Latifalia was honored at a ceremony as one of two LEEP Students of the Year for his stellar academic work and extracurricular achievements.

At the ceremony, Latifalia thanked "everyone for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself."

and Battalion Command sergeant major in JROTC.

"I have no idea what the future holds," says Holmes. "Life has blessed me in so many ways; I can't really know what to expect. Thus, I consider my success a journey, not a destination, with many more triumphs ahead of me."

Ebony Magazine Names Top Black High School Grads



Jonathan Lewis

Jonathan Lewis, 18, of Jackson, Miss., is a volunteer for the March of Dimes, where he lobbies state lawmakers to create legislation to decrease Mississippi's high infant mortality rate. He also serves as student body president and plays on the state's championship basketball team. He was named valedictorian of his senior class.



Jeremy Feaster

And when Jeremy Feaster, a 17-year-old student in Charlotte, N.C., interned at a local university, he created a research project on how to purify water for

Third World nations that received awards from the Water Environment Federation, the U.S. Army, the American Meteorological Society and the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association.

These impressive teens are just two of the six big-city school students profiled in the "2008 Top High School Seniors" article in the June issue of *Ebony* magazine.

The magazine featured 10 African-American graduating students from across the nation who have achieved not only academic excellence, earning grade point averages of 4.0 or higher, but also have participated in extensive community service.

Lewis, who attended Jackson's Provine High School, is a youth leadership volunteer with the March of Dimes because he

Ebony Magazine continued on page 12

Richard R. Green continued from page 2

“With his impressive academic record and strong commitment to public service, John certainly has a bright future ahead of him,” said Reilinger. “We are proud to support John with this scholarship to help him pursue his dream of becoming a public high school teacher.”

Jackson Student Receives Scholarship

Carissa Robinson, a graduating senior at Mississippi’s Jackson Public Schools, also received a Richard R. Green Scholarship.

She received a \$5,000 college scholarship from H. Ann Jones, a Jackson public school board member and finalist for the 2007 Richard R. Green Award.

For the first time in the award’s history, finalists for the Green Award were also presented with a \$2,500 college scholarship to present to a high school senior.

Jones decided to match the scholarship, bringing the total to \$5,000.

All scholarship applicants were required to major in a science field, and Robinson plans to pursue a career in the field of oncology and help develop a cure for cancer.

Norfolk Student Awarded

A third big-city student was the recipient of a \$2,500 Richard R. Green college scholarship: Donte Franks, a graduate of Norfolk Public Schools. Franks received the scholarship from former Norfolk school board member Anna Dodson, who was the winner of the Green Award in 2005.

A school board member for 12 years, Dodson was concerned about the low number of African-American male students graduating from the district with honors. As a result, she decided to spread the \$10,000 to four African-American students over four years, giving each a \$2,500 scholarship.

Franks will attend Hampton University in the fall and major in pre-pharmacy.

Green Scholarship Recipient Returns Home To Host Radio Show in Cleveland

In 2001, Barbara Byrd-Bennett was the CEO of the Cleveland Municipal School District when she won the Richard R. Green Award for urban education leadership.

She received a \$10,000 scholarship to present to a Cleveland student, but gave two \$5,000 college scholarships to two students.

One of those students was Basheer Jones, a student at Martin Luther King, Jr. High School. Jones, who came from a single-parent home, used the scholarship to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta. The first in his family to attend college, he graduated from Morehouse with honors with a degree in African-American studies.

The 23-year-old is now back in Cleveland and host of his own radio show, “Basheer Jones and Company,” which airs weekdays from 6 to 9 a.m. on WERE Newstalk 1490.

The purpose of his talk show is to offer listeners a positive, motivational and uplifting message. “Our listeners are very diverse,” said Jones in an interview with the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. “We try to inspire and inform them so they can be empowered to take action.”

He recalls that his best job experience was being told by a caller that his show played a role in preventing the caller from committing suicide. “Our show focuses on positive thinking. It’s all about perspective and how you look at things,” said Jones in the *Plain Dealer*.

In addition to being a radio host, Jones is an award-winning poet who has opened for Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama. He also likes to speak to youth and recently invited 24 students from his high school alma mater to witness a commencement ceremony at Morehouse.



Basheer Jones, left, with producer Kimberly Hill, and technical producer Nate Wachsman of the “Basheer Jones and Company” radio show.

Presidential Scholars Named

Nine urban students have been named Presidential Scholars, one of the nation’s highest honors for high school students.

The United States Presidential Scholars Program annually recognizes up to 141 students from across the nation who have achieved academically or have exceptional talent in the visual, creative and performing arts.

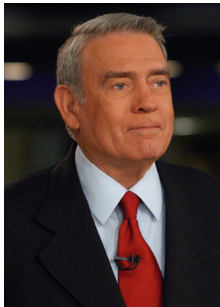
Big-city students in Chicago, New York City, Houston, West Palm Beach, Shreveport, Washington, D.C., Portland, Ore., Riviera Beach, Fla., and Henderson, Nev., were honored as Presidential Scholars. In addition, Rebecca Anderson, a student at Lincoln High School in Portland, Ore., was recognized as a Presidential Scholar both academically and in the arts.

Established in 1964 by executive order of the president, the program selects graduating students who have scored exceptionally well on the SAT or ACT college-entrance exams. For the arts component of the program, students are chosen based on their artistic ability.

Candidates are required to submit materials, including essays, school reports and transcripts for review. All applications are reviewed by a committee of individuals with experience in education.

The Presidential Scholars are provided with an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with government officials, educators, authors, musicians and scientists. They also are presented with the Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

Dan Rather to Moderate Council Town Hall Meeting Focusing On An Agenda for the New President



Dan Rather
Photo credit: John Filo

Noted journalist Dan Rather, who has interviewed every U.S. president from Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush, will moderate the Council of the Great City Schools' National Town Hall Meeting on "An Urban Education

Agenda for the New President" on Oct. 24 in Houston.

Now the anchor and managing editor of *Dan Rather Reports* on HDNet, Rather served in the same capacity with *CBS Evening News* from 1981 to 2005, considered the longest such tenure in broadcast journalism history.

This will be the second time the award-winning journalist has moderated a Council town hall meeting. In 1993, he led an all-star Council panel, which included Professor Cornel West, actor Edward James Olmos and pollster Lou Harris, in a discussion on school safety and violence.

The town hall meeting is being held in conjunction with the Council's 52nd Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 22-26, in Houston under the banner "Pioneering the Educational Frontier" and hosted by the Houston Independent School District.

Some 1,000 big-city school superintendents, senior administrators and board members as well as deans of college of education will converge to zero in on what's working to advance American urban education.



Alvin Poussaint

Conference Speakers

The conference will feature Dr. Alvin Poussaint, the prominent psy-



Erin Gruwell

chiatrist, media consultant, author and professor at Harvard Medical School.

Urban school leaders will also hear from revolutionary teacher Erin Gruwell, whose book—*The Freedom Writers Diary – How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*—inspired the movie "Freedom Writers" featuring actress Hilary Swank.



Pedro Noguera

No stranger to urban education, Professor Pedro Noguera of the Steinhardt

School of Education at New York University will also address urban educators. An urban sociologist, Noguera heads the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, and his research focuses on how schools are influenced by social and economic conditions in the urban environment.

Another Journalist

And a former New York-based correspondent for CNN, who covered urban affairs, will moderate a special conference session.



Maria Hinojosa

Maria Hinojosa, who now is the senior correspondent for the national news program *NOW* and serves as a host of a new series called *One-on-One* on PBS-TV, also serves as an anchor and the managing editor of *Latino USA*, a weekly national program on news and culture in the Latino community.

In 2004, Hinojosa had moderated the Council's first-ever national town hall meeting on "How Urban School Superintendents and Mayors Make their Relationships Work."

New Council Leaders Assume Posts



William Isler

William Isler, president of the Pittsburgh school board, became chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' board of directors on July 1.

He will preside for a one-year term over the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. The Council's board is composed of the superintendent and a school board member from each of the coalition's 66 member big-city school districts.

Isler succeeds Superintendent Carol Comeau of the Anchorage School District in Alaska.

Says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly of Comeau's leadership, "Over the last year, she guided this coalition as it worked to fix the flaws in *No Child Left Behind...*"—among many other initiatives he enumerated.

Superintendent Carol Johnson of the Boston Public Schools assumes Isler's chair-elect post, while Dilafruz Williams, board member of the Portland Public Schools in Oregon, was elected to Johnson's secretary-treasurer position.

Miami Student Helps Children with Cancer

Bria Brown, 13, an eighth-grader at a middle school in the Miami-Dade County School District, was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer at the age of 6.

Her disease went into remission, and now she has been a cancer survivor for five years and giving other young cancer patients hope and encouragement.

She delivers teddy bears to youngsters stricken with cancer at hospitals and at their homes, and recruited friends, classmates and her Girl Scout troop to help her conduct a teddy-bear drive in her community. Bria also does voluntary work with the American Cancer Society.

For her efforts, she was recently named one of America's top 10 youth volunteers in the 13th Annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program.

The awards are presented to outstanding middle and high school students across the country who have made a positive difference in their communities through their volunteerism.

Before delivering the teddy bears, Bria gets information about the recipients, so she can personalize the stuffed animals for them. "This project is important because I have the ability to bring joy and hope to kids with cancer," she says.

"My involvement will continue until there is a cure or until I leave this Earth," she stressed.

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 is supported by several national education, youth and service organizations, including the Council of the Great City Schools.



Bria Brown honored for volunteerism.

Two Urban Districts Named Best in Music

Urban school districts in Tampa, Fla., and Las Vegas have been honored for their commitment to provide children with quality music education programs.

Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Clark County School District were among the 110 school districts across the nation to be featured in the ninth annual "Best Communities for Music Education" survey. Released by the NAMM Foundation, a music advocacy organization, the survey measured school systems in all 50 states across a variety of program support, curricular and programmatic criteria.

The web-based survey was given to teachers, administrators, school board members, parents and community leaders. Participants in the survey were required to answer questions regarding several issues, including funding, enrollment, music class participation, instruction time, facilities and support for the music program. The responses were verified with district officials and the results were measured proportionally, so that school districts of different sizes were compared equally.

Rochester Students Produce Book for Third-Graders

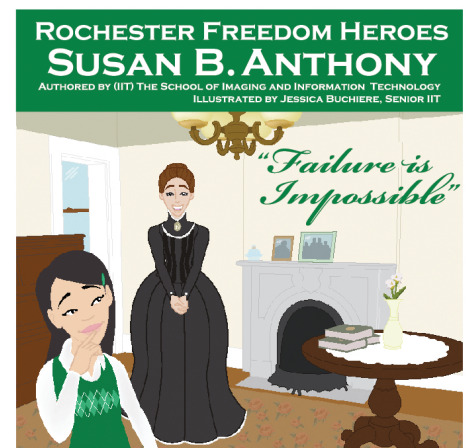
A book written by high school students in New York's Rochester City School District about Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass will be donated to all district third-graders next school year.

The book, *Freedom Heroes*, was produced by students from the School of Imaging & Information Technology at Edison. The students were inspired to write the book featuring two well-known Rochester citizens after attending a literacy conference sponsored by the mayor of Rochester as well as a city-wide conference on Frederick Douglass.

Once the Edison students decided to write the book, they met with third-grade students from a local school to get their input and find out what children like in a book. The students also received professional tips from a local children's author.

Freedom Heroes was produced entirely by students, with students conducting the research, writing, designing, illustrating, publishing and coordinating printing.

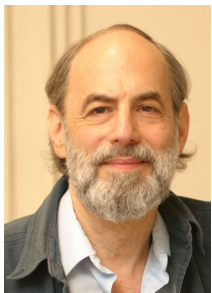
The book is being donated to district third-grade classes and will also be available at local bookstores. Funding for the book was provided by several local organizations as well as individual donors.



Council Announces Second Round Of Research Fellowships

In a continuing effort to spearhead research that addresses the needs of urban school districts, the Council of the Great City Schools has selected three distinguished education researchers to pursue rigorous, policy-relevant research projects in collaboration with big-city school districts.

The three senior researchers, who represent the second round of the Council's Senior Urban Education Research Fellowship program, will receive funding for projects beginning this summer. They are:



James Rosenbaum

■ Dr. James Rosenbaum, Northwestern University. *Does Postsecondary Advising Improve Student Motivation and Progress in High School?*



Becky Smerdon

■ Dr. Becky Smerdon, Academy for Educational Development (AED). *High School Ready? A Study of Middle School Students in the District of Columbia and their Transitions to High School.*



John Tyler

■ Dr. John Tyler, Brown University. *Using Student Performance Data to Inform Instructional Practice: Lessons from Cincinnati.*

Two of the projects expand on the theme of the development and evaluation of student tracking systems and the use of this data to tailor instruction and interventions.

AED's Smerdon will embark on a collaborative research partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools to examine middle school student characteristics and their transition to high school in order to create both an indicator of high school readiness and a high school readiness report card for schools serving middle grades.

Working with Cincinnati Public Schools, Brown University's Tyler will focus on "data-driven instruction" by evaluating the implementation and usage of a web-based, student performance tracking system designed to use benchmark assessment data to improve teaching and learning throughout the district.

The third project, conducted by Northwestern University's Rosenbaum, will be a study utilizing rich student and teacher survey data available from the Consortium on Chicago School Research to assess the impact on student outcomes of a Chicago high school advisory program that uses college counselors to increase students' and teachers' focus on college readiness and promote college preparation and attendance.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded the Council of the Great City Schools more than \$2.5 million in September of 2006 to establish the fellowship program, which aims to facilitate significant, on-going partnerships between the research community and urban school districts and to produce a set of high quality studies that yield reliable guidance addressing the challenges and decisions urban school districts face in the reform of secondary education.

This is the second of three rounds of fellowship awards, awarded annually to three researchers with at least 7-10 years of experience and an established track record of working with urban school districts.

A request for proposals for the final round of fellowship awards will be available in fall 2008 at <http://www.cgcs.org/research/fellowship.aspx>.

Urban School Principals Win Ambassador In Education Awards

Spence Evans, principal of Amos Hiatt Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa, visits the homes and families of all new students before school starts to build relationships between parents and the school.

Evans' effort to engage the community is the reason he was recently presented with the 2008 MetLife Foundation Ambassador in Education Award.

Sponsored by the National Civic League and the MetLife Foundation, the award recognizes 25 middle and high school principals in urban public schools whose community engagement activities have led them to become national role models.

In addition to Evans, principals in schools in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Detroit, Fort Worth, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Oakland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Tampa and Washington, D.C., were recognized for their collaborative efforts.

The Ambassadors in Education Award recognizes school principals who build partnerships with community organizations, parents and guardians; resolve conflicts and promote safety in the school and the community; or promote civic engagement and community service.

The recipients receive a \$5,000 grant and are recognized at an award ceremony at their school.

The award program was established in 2003 after a survey by MetLife found a divide between educators and their schools' communities. Each year the award program alternates recognition between teachers and principals, and since its inception, the program has honored 115 educators with more than \$500,000 in grants.

"The Ambassadors Education Award recognizes educators who are exceptional leaders in connecting school and community," said Sibyl Jacobson, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation.

Impact of War on Students Makes Learning Difficult

Students with a mother or father in the military, deployed to combat zones in Iraq or Afghanistan, may have difficulties focusing on their homework and tests, say military officials.

In Anchorage, Alaska, Mark Mortier, who counsels teens in U.S. Army families in the city, and school liaison Brian Griggs have briefed school district administrators and principals about how important it is for school system and military personnel to tighten the safety net for military families.

Mortier told Anchorage School District officials that in November before the return of the U.S. Army 4th Airborne Brigade, 59 percent of seventh-grade students in military families and 39 percent of their eighth-grade peers had one or more failing grades. And even after the return, many students remained distracted from their school work.

In checking on the students some six months after the troops' return, it has been discovered that the same students are evenly split – about one-third are doing better, another third are the same, and grades for the last third have gone down.

"The term 'emotional rollercoaster' fits very well for these kids," Mortier said. "While their family member is deployed, they have more freedom, less structure and more responsibility to tend to the family, and when dad comes home, they say they are so glad he is safe and that mom is not worrying anymore, but there's more conflict as the authority shifts in the household."

Mortier pointed out that the military expects 50 percent of its students will leave the Anchorage School District this summer, and be replaced with new students in the fall.

"We know our fifth and sixth graders are really struggling," said Mortier. "And we know that transition, like going to a new school or entering middle or high school, along with deployment equals significant academic problems," he added.

Anchorage's Romig Middle School Principal Sven Gustafson said he discovered that he had a significant number of students affected by the deployment of U.S. National Guard personnel by using the military information form Mortier and Griggs recommended to school district principals.

Army Chaplain Jerry Sieg said support from the Anchorage school system helps alleviate the grief and loss faced by many military families. "This may be a year of firsts for some {students}. The first year dad won't be there on the first day of school, or the first summer without dad," said the chaplain.

"What you do at the school is so important to them," he stressed.

Tampa Students Receive Perfect ACT Scores



Trung Tran

Trung Tran and Stephanie Kiley both attended Hillsborough High School in Tampa, Fla., where they were members of the school's prestigious International Baccalaureate Program. They also have something else in common: they each scored a perfect score on the ACT test.

Trung, who recently graduated, and Kiley, who will be a senior next school year, each scored a perfect 36 composite score on the ACT.

In high school, Trung was a member of the math team, reached the rank of cadet captain in the Civil Air Patrol and performed on a comedy team. He is headed to the University of Central Florida to study aerospace engineering.

Louisville Student's Aid To Homeless Rewarded

When Louisville senior honor student William Payne saw a flier from the local YMCA asking for clothing to benefit homeless men, he decided to go one step further and conduct his own neighborhood clothing drive.

"I got an inventory of clothing the YMCA needed, created a database out of the list and sent out my own flier to family, friends and neighbors," said Payne, who recently graduated from duPont Manual High.

His determination to help others is a reason Payne was selected as one of 10 national winners of the 2008 AXA Achievement Scholarship worth \$25,000. Sponsored by AXA, a financial services firm, the scholarship program recognizes high school students who have demonstrated dedication, an ability to achieve in college and a readiness to help others.

Payne was first honored on the state level as an AXA Achiever and received a \$10,000 college scholarship. The program recognized one student in each state and from those students, 10 were selected as national winners and received an additional \$15,000.

In addition to organizing his own clothing drive, Payne has championed awareness of children's needs and community concerns as an active member of Jack and Jill of America, a nonprofit organization that advocates community service. A member of the organization for more than 15 years, Payne currently serves as vice president for the Midwest region, which includes eight states.

Payne has also served as president of the Mayor's Youth Cabinet, and has been a member of Kentucky's Governor's Scholar Program, the Princeton University W.E.B. Dubois Scholars Program, and his high school's football and track teams.

In the fall, Payne will attend Morehouse College in Atlanta and major in business administration and international studies.

New Security System In Baton Rouge Tested In School ‘Shooting’

In a simulated exercise, two police officers pose as gunmen and begin “shooting” in a school in Baton Rouge, La.

Eleven individuals were “killed” and 14 “wounded” in the first drill. Only one “killed” and one “injured” in the second exercise, according to a news report.

The reason why there wasn’t as much carnage in the second “shooting” is because of a new, state-of-the-art security system recently installed at McKinley Middle Academic Magnet School in Baton Rouge.

In what some witnesses described as an eerie, almost too realistic demonstration, the new security system helped law enforcement officers to respond to the second “shooting” in much faster time than using conventional techniques.

The high-tech security system allows the middle school to be networked directly with city law enforcement and emergency agencies through a “Virtual Emergency Response Network,” which gives them the opportunity to view the inside of the school and assess the emergency situation in a matter of seconds. The network uses school maps, alarm devices and video cameras in the event of an actual school emergency.

“We take seriously our responsibility to keep students safe in our buildings,” said Superintendent Charlotte Placide of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. “This new technology allows the school building to become a ‘Smart building’ – in which critical security and fire information data are transferred from the school directly to the first responders in a matter of seconds.”

Baton Rouge Police Chief Jeff LeDuff said in the *Baton Rouge Advocate* that the new security system tips the balance toward law enforcement. “It gives our children a fighting chance,” he said.

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‘Gentlemen’s Club’ Launched in Detroit

Boys in the third, fourth and fifth grades at Detroit Public Schools’ Fleming Academy learn the art of being a gentleman – from knotting their ties to a firm, confident handshake – in the “Gentlemen’s Club.” Fleming principal Ronnie Sims saw the niceties of social interaction slipping away because young children weren’t learning the lessons of proper behavior and etiquette to develop self-confidence, respect and good character. Fleming’s young gentlemen are the official greeters of building guests.

NYC, Detroit Schools Win ‘Change’ Awards

The Hugo Newman College Prep School in New York City and the Ronald Brown Academy in Detroit were two of six schools in the nation to receive an award for having significantly changed and improved student achievement.

The 2008 Panasonic National School Change Award is conducted and cosponsored by the Panasonic Corporation of North America and the Fordham University Graduate School of Education and is presented to six schools that have achieved significant, positive change in school culture over a 3-5 year period.

Schools are judged based on specific criteria such as the depth of the change, its impact on student achievement and the improvement in test scores as well as evidence that achievement gaps have been narrowed.

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

Each winning school receives a \$5,000 grant and the opportunity to participate in a major national research project focusing on school change. The award also includes

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Security System *continued from page 11*

In addition to the installation of the security technology, McKinley Middle Academic School has also been outfitted with "Safe Rooms" throughout the building. The "Safe Rooms" are equipped with bullet-resistant locks and a signaling station that can be used by teachers to speak directly to law enforcement officers during an actual emergency situation.

During the simulations, the ability to lock classrooms allowed police to isolate the two assailants, preventing them from doing more harm.

The new security system becomes operational at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year at McKinley, which was chosen for the system because it is fairly new and already has built-in alarms, sensors and video cameras.

NYC, Detroit *continued from page 11*

a presentation by the United States Department of Education at a ceremony in New York City.

Great City Grads



Michael Norman

U.S. Army Captain

Died in Iraq on January 31, 2008

1989 graduate

Anderson High School

Austin Independent School District

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believes the organization's efforts are vital to the medical community. "Giving back to the community fosters an attitude of unselfishness and builds moral character," he said in an interview with *Ebony*.

Lewis, who also volunteers at the Red Cross helping Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, plans to major in computer engineering at Jackson State University.

Feaster, who attended Charlotte's Harding University High, graduated with a GPA of 5.23 and was offered more than \$1.3 million in scholarships. He has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army and an annual walk for the hungry. "It is important to leave my community better than I found it," he said in *Ebony*.

He plans to study chemical engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology, where he received a scholarship covering his four-year tuition, stipends for \$12,000 and a 10-day leadership experience trip to Canada.

In addition to Lewis and Feaster, the magazine profiled students in Cleveland, Boston, Chicago and Washington, D.C.



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