



- Oakland's New Chief, p.3
- Diploma to a Veteran, p.7
- A 'Jr. Superintendent', p.9
- **LEGISLATIVE**
- Ed. Budget Questioned, p.10

Newsweek Ranks Big-City Schools At 'Top of the Class'

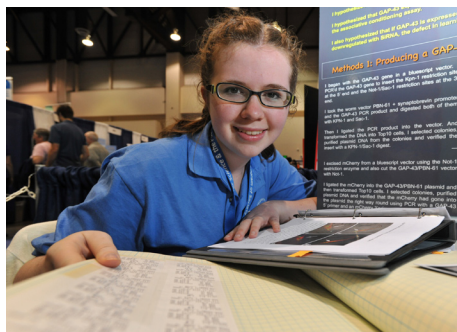
Newsweek magazine recently ranked the Dallas Independent School District's School for the Talented and Gifted and the School of Science and Engineering the No. 1 and No. 2 best public high schools in the nation, respectively.

They along with three other schools in districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools made the top 10 list of the leading 1,500 schools in the newsmagazine's "Top of the Class" edition.

The other three urban schools are Stanton College Prep (No. 4) and Paxon School for Advanced Studies (No. 6) in Jacksonville, Fla., and Suncoast Community (No. 7) in the Palm Beach County school system.

Of the best 20 schools ranked in the 2009 class of top U.S. high schools, 10 are in Council districts. The other urban schools include:

Newsweek Ranks continued on page 3



Olivia Schwob, a junior at the Boston Latin School, was one of the three top winners of the Intel Foundation Young Scientist Award.

Recently Wheelchair-Bound Student Steps Up to Receive Diploma in Orlando

Lorra Remy had accomplished many things during her senior year at Jones High School in Orlando, Fla. She had a 3.5 grade-point average and was one of only 300 students in the nation to receive a \$20,000 Dell Scholarship.

Yet, one of her biggest accomplishments this year was simply walking across the stage by herself to receive her high school diploma.

In August of last year, she and her family were visiting relatives in Haiti when their car was hit by a driver of a semi truck who had fallen asleep at the wheel.

No one was killed but Remy fractured her wrist as well as her right femur, the bone that extends from the hip to the knee. She underwent surgery in Haiti and a second surgery in Orlando, where doctors placed her leg in an external fixator, in which pins are placed into the bones above and below the fracture and secured together outside the skin with clamps and rods.



Lorra Remy holds the high school diploma she received after graduating from Jones High School in Orlando, Fla.

After her surgery, Remy went to a nursing home where she stayed for almost two months. It was a scary experience for

Wheelchair-Bound continued on page 5

Boston Student Wins World Science Honor

A Boston student recently received the prestigious Intel Foundation Young Scientist Award and a \$50,000 scholarship in the 2009 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, considered the world's largest pre-college science competition.

Olivia Schwob, a junior at the Boston Latin School, was one of three top winners of the "Young Scientist" Award in the

recent international competition held in Reno, Nev., which drew more than 1,500 high school students from around the globe.

She won the top Intel award for her project titled *How Worms Learn, Part III: Mammalian Gene Expression and Associative Conditioning*.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates Addresses Wichita Alma Mater

In 1961, Robert Gates received his high school diploma from East High School in Wichita, Kansas.

Forty-eight years later, Gates, the U.S. secretary of defense, returned to his alma mater to speak at the commencement ceremony for the 2009 graduating class.

Gates was invited to speak by East High School senior Katherine Thomas, who had sent the defense secretary a letter earlier this year inviting him to address her fellow graduates.

“He was very down-to-earth and nice,” said Thomas in an interview with the district’s newsletter, the *Express*. “I can’t believe that he agreed to come to our graduation.”

During his commencement address to the more than 400 graduates, he mentioned by name some of his teachers who inspired him and told the class that what they learned from their teachers will influence them for the rest of their lives.

“In many ways out of all the places I’ve gone, the jobs I’ve held, the notable people I have worked with and met, I will always consider myself, first and foremost, just a kid from Kansas who got lucky,” said Gates.



U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates addresses the 2009 graduating class at East High School in Wichita, Kansas.

The 22nd secretary of defense confessed that he received a “D” in calculus in his first year in college but told the graduating seniors that it is okay to make mistakes along the way as long as they learn and gain from them. He also shared how he changed majors and career paths,

but by learning from his mistakes and being focused, he was able to become who he is today and encouraged the graduates to be leaders and give back to their community.

Robert Gates continued on page 3



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Oakland, Christina Districts Name New Superintendents



Anthony Smith

Anthony Smith was recently named the new superintendent of California's Oakland Unified School District. Smith, who is the deputy superintendent of the San Francisco school district, will become Oakland's first permanent, locally chosen superintendent since the state of California took control of the 38,826-student school system in 2003.

He will succeed interim superintendent Roberta Mayor, who was selected in 2008 to strengthen the finances of the district to prepare for the full return of local governance.

Smith joined the San Francisco school system in 2007 as deputy superintendent for instruction, innovation and social justice, a new position designed to address issues of equity and social justice and eliminate the district's racial achievement gap.

Prior to working in San Francisco, he was the superintendent of California's Emeryville Unified School District, where he took the helm after the board of education regained control of the school district after a state takeover.

In a news statement, Smith, a resident of Oakland, said he is honored and humbled by the opportunity to serve as superintendent.

"Public schools are a sacred trust tasked with developing the most precious asset a city has to offer – its children....As OUSD superintendent, I will strive relentlessly to ensure that our students learn, live, work and play in a school system that helps them fully realize their potential."

Also selecting a superintendent was Delaware's Christina School District, which named Marcia Lyles to take the reins of the 17,000-student school system.

Lyles is the deputy chancellor for teaching and learning for the New York City Department of Education and has been an educator in the New York school system for 30 years. She has served as a regional superintendent, building and district administrator, principal, assistant principal and taught high school English for eight years.

Lyles succeeds interim superintendent Freeman Williams, the district's assistant superintendent for student and administration services.



Marcia Lyles

Council Changes Leadership



Carol Johnson

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson becomes chair of the Council of the Great City Schools' board of directors on July 1, succeeding William Isler, a member of the Pittsburgh school board.

She will preside for a one-year term over the policymaking body of the national organization representing the needs of urban public schools. The board is composed of the superintendent and a school board member from each of the Council's 67 member big-city school districts.

Johnson steps up from chair-elect, a post that will be assumed by Dilafruz Williams, a board member with the Portland, Ore., school system.

Williams relinquishes her secretary-treasurer position to Superintendent Beverly Hall of Atlanta Public Schools, a newly elected Council officer.

Robert Gates continued from page 2

"For me, it all started at East High," said Gates. "And for all of you with this graduation, the door of opportunity opens for you to serve and to lead. Congratulations and good luck."

Gates received a standing ovation from the students and shook hands and took a picture with each graduate after they received their diplomas.

After his speech, the school presented him with a basket of East High memorabilia as a thank you, including a piece of the original gym floor.

Newsweek Ranks continued from page 1

- Academic Magnet in North Charleston, S.C. (No. 12);
- City Honors in Buffalo (No. 13);
- Classen School of Advanced Studies in Oklahoma City (No. 14);
- School for Advanced Studies in Miami (No. 15); and

- The Early College at Guilford in Greensboro, N.C. (No. 19)

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.

Some 35 urban schools ranked in the top 100 on the newsmagazine's 2009 list, with a number of other big-city schools also ranked among the best.

Charlotte Student Develops High-Tech Skills



Yonas Solomon

Yonas Solomon, a student at Independence High School in Charlotte, N.C., is already skilled in one of the top high-tech jobs of the future – and he just finished high school. He recently earned a CompTIA A+ certification and is about to head to a prestigious university to study computer science and engineering – for free.

“I’m proud of myself,” Solomon said. “I’ve worked hard and it’s paid off so far.”

The CompTIA A+ international certification is recognized by major hardware and software vendors and distributors and certifies a person is skilled in computer installation, configuration, diagnosing, preventive maintenance and basic networking.

“I had always wanted to get the certification,” Solomon said. “When I took engineering classes in tenth grade, I talked to my teacher about it. He gave me some study materials and I did some research on-line and I took the test.”

The graduating senior is already on the front lines of one of the fastest-growing fields in the world. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, computer software engineers are expected to be among the fastest-growing occupations through the year 2016.

Solomon has pushed himself to excel in school. He was named an AP and North Carolina Scholar and won a National Achievement Scholarship. He has a grade-point average of 4.7083 and is ranked second in his class.

Solomon received a full scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania, where he plans to major in computer science and engineering. “I grew up not making excuses for what happens to me,” he said. “But I also had a lot of good teachers. A lot of good ones.”

The Class of 2009



Rochester Students Defy Odds



Liasor Dima

Liasor Dima, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School in Rochester, N.Y., will be attending St. John Fisher College on a scholarship where he plans to major in biology. But the path to becoming a college student wasn’t easy.

Dima is originally from the Sudan and when civil war broke out in the country he and his family fled to Ethiopia. The family lived in refugee camps for many years and Dima’s strongest memories of those years are of people dying of hunger.

Eventually, his family was able to settle in the United States and in 2000, speaking very little English, he became a student of the Rochester school system.

At Thomas Jefferson High, Dima has excelled academically, ranking fourth in his graduating class of 110 with an overall grade-point average of 4.512 and serving as senior class president.

Dima considers education “more precious than many things in his life” and credits his parents for instilling the value of education in him.



Eduardo Gonzalez

After college, he would like to work in the United Nations overseeing the distribution of food to nations in need.

Another Rochester student who has defied the odds is Eduardo Gonzalez, a student at James Monroe High School. In 2000, Gonzalez came to the United States from

Rochester Students continued on page 6

Boston Twins Excel Academically



Boston twins Jiajun Shu and Jiazhen Li at their high school graduation.

When twins Jiazhen (Janice) Li and Jiajun (Justin) Shu left Shanghai, China and moved to Boston in the middle of their ninth grade year to attend the Urban Science

Academy, they found their first year very challenging due to their difficulty communicating in English.

Yet the siblings quickly felt welcomed as they were surrounded by caring staff and students during and after school.

“We stayed after school every day for two years,” said Shu. “Besides the one-on-one extra help, being able to use picture dictionaries and reading software were very helpful. Also, during this time, our teachers went out of their way to give us

Boston Twins continued on page 6



Adelmer Lopez, the valedictorian of the Class of 2009 at George Washington Community High School in Indianapolis, addresses graduates.

High-Poverty School in Indianapolis Graduates Entire Class

At George Washington Community High School in Indianapolis, 89 percent of students live in poverty and approximately 30 percent of students drop out of school before graduating.

Yet, the Class of 2009 has achieved a remarkable feat: all of its 78 students have been accepted to college.

The high acceptance rate is a result of the school taking an active role in encouraging its students to attend a postsecondary institution.

These efforts include inviting mentors from community programs as well as local businesses to speak to students about the importance of college.

In addition, all seniors are required to write a letter in English class to a college admissions officer introducing themselves, and social studies classes include a section led by students from the Indiana University-Purdue University Indiana (IUPUI) discussing college.

The school also emphasizes higher education by having the nameplates outside the office doors of all its administrators list what college they attended.

And at every parent orientation, Washington's principal Keith Burke stresses to parents that he expects every student to attend college when they graduate.

"We're going to give them that opportunity," said Burke, in an interview with the *Indianapolis Star*. "We're setting them up for failure if we don't get them at least that chance."

When Adelmer Lopez first entered Washington School as an eighth-grader, he was at a high risk of dropping out. Four years later he is the school's valedictorian. In the fall, he will major in engineering at IUPUI.

Lopez managed to succeed academically while working 30 hours a week as a janitor to help his mother provide for his three younger brothers.

In his commencement speech, he told his fellow classmates, "Although we come from Indianapolis schools like Washington, we're not what people believe us to be. We're not set to failure."

According to the *Star*, approximately 85 percent of last year's graduates attended college and this year officials expect all but one or two to do so.

Wheelchair-Bound continued from page 1

the 18-year-old, who was the youngest person at the facility.

"I was also afraid that I would have to spend another year in school and not be able to graduate," said Remy in an interview with the *Urban Educator*.

She was released from the nursing home in November and soon returned to school in a wheelchair.

School officials wanted to put her in regular classes, but teachers knew her strong work ethic, and were confident she would be able to handle Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Remy had a heavy class load that included AP literature, government and macroeconomics, in addition to her serving as senior class president.

"School starts at 9:00, but I would get to school around 7:00 and stay late," said Remy, who credits her teachers at Jones with helping her to succeed.

The daughter of a single mother who works two jobs to support the family, Remy soon found out that her health insurance had run out and she could no longer attend sessions at a local rehabilitation center. So she had to do the rehabilitation exercises three times a day on her own. But Remy did them diligently because she was determined to walk across the stage unassisted to receive her high school diploma in May.

By January, she was walking with the assistance of a cane and by February she was walking on her own.

"I learned from this experience not to let any obstacle hold me down," said Remy. "And that anything is possible if you put your mind to it."

In the fall, Remy plans to enroll in Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences to become a registered nurse with an emphasis in pediatrics.

She was one of only five students in Florida to receive a \$20,000 Dell Scholarship. The program provides scholarships to underserved students who are academically prepared and college ready.

And not only did Remy walk across the stage by herself to receive her diploma, she also was able to achieve another goal. "I was able to dance at my prom," she beamed.

Award-Winning Austin Superintendent Shares Prize with Student

Superintendent Pat Forgione of the Austin Independent School District recently presented a \$10,000 college scholarship that he had received when winning the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership.

He awarded a Richard R. Green Scholarship to Angga Pratama, class president at Bowie High School in Austin for three years and captain of the school football team, who has a 4.14 grade-point average.

Pratama plans to attend the University of Texas at Austin and major in civil engineering.

Last fall, Forgione won the Richard R. Green Award for outstanding leadership as a big-city school district superintendent, sponsored by the Council of the Great City Schools, ARAMARK Education and Voyager Expanded Learning. The award is named in honor of the first African-American leader of New York City public schools who had also headed Minneapolis Public Schools.

As the recipient of the Green Award, Forgione received a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a 2009 graduate of his choice in the Austin school system.

Norfolk Student Honored

Another Richard R. Green Scholarship was also presented recently to a student in Norfolk, Va., from former Norfolk school board member Anna Dodson, who won the Green Award in 2005.

She presented a \$2,500 award to Ramon Quintin Jones of Norview High School, who plans to attend Old Dominion University.

Concerned about the low number of African-American students graduating with honors, Dodson decided to spread the \$10,000 scholarship she received as a Green Award winner to four students over four years, giving each a \$2,500 scholarship.



Austin Superintendent Pat Forgione, left, congratulates Angga Pratama for winning the Richard R. Green Scholarship.

Presidential Scholars Named

Some 17 students from urban school districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools have been named 2009 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 are considered distinguished graduating seniors academically or artistically.

This year's scholars hail from Council school districts that include Anchorage, Little Rock, the District of Columbia, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade County, Chicago, Wichita, Omaha, Clark County (Las Vegas), Albuquerque, New York City, Charlotte, Greensboro, Columbus (Ohio), Providence, Austin and Richmond, Va.

Established in 1964 by an executive order of the president, the program selects graduating students who have scored ex-

Presidential Scholars continued on page 11

Rochester Students continued from page 4

Puerto Rico with limited English skills. He started elementary school as an English Language Learner and in sixth grade entered the Language Academy, an accelerated program for students interested in developing proficiency in both English and Spanish and who want to excel in other subjects as well.

Gonzalez's academic abilities soon became clear: as an eighth-grader, he earned high school credit in mathematics and Spanish.

As a senior, he has taken AP courses and is a teaching assistant for a biotechnology course. He is also editor of the school newspaper, a member of the National Honor Society, and student representative for the school's United Way campaign. He has pursued all of these activities while holding a part-time job at a local supermarket to help support his family.

Gonzalez has earned numerous awards, including the Rochester Board of Education's Hispanic Heritage Award for the past six years.

This fall, he will attend MIT on a full scholarship and plans to pursue a degree in biological engineering. He eventually wants to obtain a Ph.D., with the goal of one day being able to clone organs for medical transplants.

Boston Twins continued from page 4

independent reading books that helped our English vocabulary grow."

The twins challenged themselves further by taking many Advanced Placement courses, and also immersed themselves in the school community as participants in the garden club, New Orleans community service trip, school band, and other extra curricular activities.

Their hard work has paid off with both of them being accepted to Northeastern University, which they will attend in the fall. Shu plans to major in finance and then pursue a career in business, while Li, who was the class salutatorian, earned a full scholarship to Northeastern and plans to major in chemistry to prepare for a career in forensics or medicine.



A Veteran Graduate

World War II veteran Robert Morris Sr. receives a diploma from Florida's Duval County school board member Stan Jordan during the recent Terry Parker High School graduation at the Jacksonville Veteran Memorial Arena. Said the uniformed board member, a retired Army colonel, "It is appropriate to take this brief moment so our students can reflect on those who put their lives on hold to serve this free republic in the preservation of freedom." Thirteen WWII and Korean conflict veterans joined the Class of 2009 as they received their diplomas at graduation ceremonies in Duval County.

Legislature Commends Two Anchorage Educators

It's not often that a state legislative body takes time to honor educators working in the trenches.

But recently, the Alaska State Legislature commended two Anchorage School District teacher specialists in its Child in Transition/Homeless Department.

Barb Dexter and Beth Snyder work with more than 1,000 homeless and foster youth who attend school in Anchorage. They help homeless students remain in the

same school as their parents move from one sleeping arrangement to another.

For their tireless work, often beyond work hours, the Alaska State Legislature presented them with a legislative citation, sponsored by Rep. Les Gara and Sen. Johnny Ellis.

"Barb and Beth have been godsend to the students they work with," said Gara in a press release. "They epitomize public service, and deserve more than we can offer them in thanks."

Baltimore's Investment In Pre-K Programs Yields Good Return

Baltimore City Public Schools has expanded the number of pre-k programs and this increased investment in early childhood education has resulted in more students entering kindergarten ready to learn.

According to the Maryland Department of Education, the percentage of students starting kindergarten with the necessary skills and behaviors to successfully meet kindergarten expectations has more than doubled in the last five years.

Last fall, 64.9 percent of kindergartners arrived at school fully ready for school, compared with 57.1 percent the previous year. This is a one-year gain of nearly 8 percentage points and up from 26.5 percent in 2003.

In addition, while 17 Maryland school systems improved their school readiness percentages from last year, Baltimore, along with another school district, registered the largest gains over time. A 2009 Maryland Model for School Readiness report released by the state hailed the school readiness gains by the district as "remarkable progress."

The district has increased the number of early childhood education programs, and currently 114 of the district's 126 elementary schools house pre-k programs. The 210 half- and full-day programs serve 4,200 students. Five years ago, the district had only 176 programs serving 3,520 students.

The school system also plans to use its share of the federal stimulus money it will receive to provide universal, full-day pre-k to all 4-year-olds. Over the next two years, district officials will seek to increase the number of pre-k programs to 276 serving 5,525 students.

"It's critical that our children have the tools and skills they need to learn by the time they are five," said Baltimore Schools CEO Andrés Alonso. "It is a foundation of success for their entire education."

Star Students Recognized Like Athletes in Dallas

Every year across the nation, high school star athletes publicly announce which college team they will play for in an event known as National Signing Day.

Inspired by this athletic ritual, Dallas Independent School District recently celebrated its first Academic Signing Day. The event was designed to recognize students for academic achievement and acceptance to college.

More than 250 high school seniors gathered, along with their parents, to sign the name of the college they will attend.

The students are participants in the Academic Success Program, a college access

initiative in 12 district high schools that connects first-generation, college-bound students with top-tier universities. The program works with students and their parents to encourage students to attend post-secondary institutions. Students receive SAT preparation, academic assistance and help with college applications. In addition, the program addresses financial and cultural concerns parents might have about their children leaving home.

According to Dallas officials, students of the Class of 2009 have received more than \$50 million in financial aid and scholarships.



Dallas students participate in the district's first Academic Signing Day, writing the name of the college they plan to attend.

Austin Teachers End Year With New Laptops

As the 2008-2009 school year came to a close, teachers in Austin, Tex., received new laptop computers thanks to voters who approved a bond measure last year.

The Austin Independent School District distributed more than 4,000 Dell laptops and nearly 2,000 Apple MacBooks to teachers, principals and assistant principals.

The district's 2008 Bond Program, approved by city voters in May 2008, included more than \$69.8 million for technology upgrades, which included laptop computers for Austin educators. The laptops are replacing aged desktop computers.

"The new machines are much easier to use than their predecessors, and process information noticeably faster," says Superintendent Pat Forgione in a press release, noting that it helps teachers input student grades more efficiently.

Moreover, he adds, "Teachers see the laptop as an employment benefit."

Austin's 2009 *Teacher of the Year*, Cyndie Stocking, says the laptop provides her with many of the tools she needs in the various classrooms she visits daily as an inclusion teacher at Dawson Elementary School.

"I ... believe having access to my laptop throughout the day will enhance my ability to modify lessons more quickly – and even on the spot, should the need be – as I am working with students in a range of classes," she explains.

Program Helps Students in Six Ohio School Districts Study Law

Incoming 9th-graders in six Ohio cities will have an opportunity this summer to study at university law schools through a program piloted last summer in Cleveland and Columbus.

The Law and Leadership Institute, sponsored by the Ohio State Bar Association and others, has expanded its program to help disadvantaged and minority students consider the legal profession while

entering high school.

The institute will enroll talented students this summer from schools in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Akron and Toledo, helping to prepare them for college.

Last year's Law and Leadership Institute pilot program involved Cleveland State University's Cleveland-Marshall College of Law and Ohio State University's Moritz

College of Law.

"We always had some kind of activity going and people coming in," said student David Boone in Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* newspaper, who took classes at Cleveland State's law school for five weeks last summer. He and classmates in the pilot program heard speakers, took field trips and studied criminal law among a host of activities – with law students working with them.



Jackson Public Schools Superintendent Lonnie Edwards listens to kindergarten student Jesse Montgomery address a school board activity.

Kindergarten Student Serves As 'Junior Superintendent' in Jackson

A kindergarten student in Jackson, Miss., recently served as "junior superintendent" during a school board program, as the official superintendent wanted to spotlight the youngster for his reading and oratory skills as well as his poise.

Jackson Public Schools Superintendent Lonnie Edwards Sr. invited Jesse Montgomery, a kindergarten student at Johnson Elementary School, to serve by his side during a school board recognition program.

He said that Jesse is a "verification of when parents and teachers work with students early and expect them to read."

Superintendent Edwards wanted to shed light on the importance of early childhood education. Since becoming superintendent of the Jackson school system in August 2008, he has launched a pre-k Initiative.

The Jackson school district surveyed the pre-kindergarten and childcare centers in the city to develop an early childhood forum. In March, the district held its first "Pre-Kindergarten and Child Care Symposium" for early childhood professionals.

"We are fully aware of the significance of the educational experiences children have before they ever reach Jackson Public Schools," says Edwards. "We want to learn

from what early childhood educators in the area are doing, and also make sure that the pre-k sites in the community ...will provide optimum learning opportunities for all of our children."

Jackson School Wins 'Inspiration' Award

William B. Murrah High School in Jackson, Miss., is one of three schools to win the College Board 2009 Inspiration Award, which recognizes secondary schools that have made academic strides in inspiring students to prepare for higher education.

The award includes a \$25,000 monetary prize for each of the winning schools for helping underserved students achieve access to college.

Inspiration Award
continued on page 11

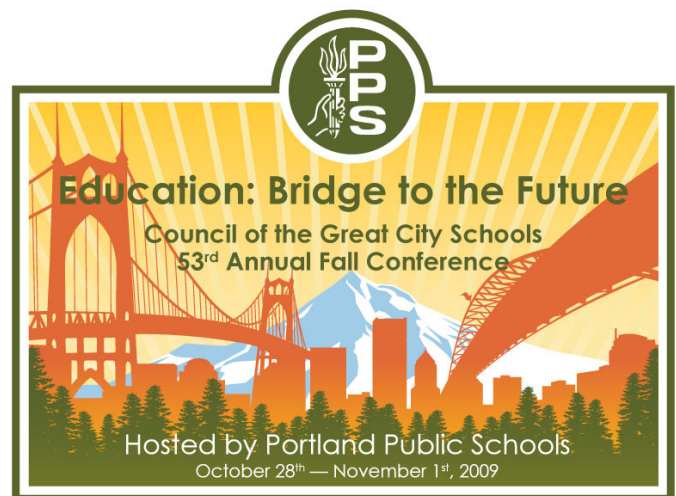
Cleveland, Rochester Schools Win 'Change' Award

Two schools in Cleveland and Rochester, N.Y., were recently recognized for making significant and sustained improvements in student performance and school climate.

The 2009 Panasonic National School Change Award was presented to Rochester's Dr. Freddie Thomas High School and the Cleveland School of the Arts-Lower Campus. The schools were among only six in the nation to receive the award, sponsored by the Panasonic Corporation of North America.

Dr. Freddie Thomas High School is the only high school in the nation selected for the award this year and the Cleveland School of the Arts-Lower Campus is the first school from the state of Ohio to win the award, according to Cleveland district officials.

The Panasonic National School Change Award is presented to schools that have achieved significant, positive change in school culture over a 4-5 year period. Schools are judged based on specific criteria such as the depth of change, its impact on academic performance and the improvement in test scores as well as student attendance, promotion and graduation rates.



Administration's Education Budget Questioned

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

In early May, President Obama proposed his FY2010 Federal Budget, the first full budget announcement of the new administration. The Education Department indicated that the proposed budget would advance education reform and cut waste.

Closer scrutiny of the details, however, suggests that the Administration's new education priorities would be paid for primarily by cuts and freezes in other programs, including an unprecedented proposed cut of \$1.5 billion to the Title I LEA basic formula grant program.

Specifically, the FY2010 Department of Education Budget includes a 10.4 percent cut to the Title I formula grants to LEAs; a freeze in Title II Teacher Quality Grants; a freeze in Title III Grants for English Language Learners; a freeze in Perkins Vocational Education Grants; and a freeze in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Grants.

The budget seeks to terminate a dozen other grant programs, including the \$294 million Safe and Drug Free Schools state formula grant program.



If adopted by Congress, the proposed \$1.5 billion cut in Title I basic grants would result in a loss of 10 percent for nearly every participating school district in the nation, and a loss of over \$350 million among the Great City Schools in school year 2010-2011.

The Administration's new funding priorities include adding \$1 billion to the State School Improvement Grants; \$500 million for Title I Early Childhood State Matching Grants; \$300 million for Early Childhood Challenge Grants; a \$420 million increase in the Teacher Incentive

Fund; a new \$300 million new Reading Initiative; and a new \$50 million High School Graduation Initiative.

The proposed education budget cuts and freezes in critical Department programs have received a chilly reception in the Congressional appropriations subcommittees on Capitol Hill, as well as from the Council of the Great City Schools and other school groups.

The annual Congressional appropriations process will begin soon, where the final FY2010 Federal education funding priorities will be established.

Richmond District Partners With Local University To Produce Principals

Virginia's Richmond Public Schools has teamed up with Virginia Commonwealth University in a project to recruit, prepare and retain principals in the school system.

VCU has received a \$5.2-million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's School Leadership Program to launch Project ALL (Authentic Learning for Leaders), aimed at developing secondary school principals and assistant principals in the Virginia capital city's school district.

Exemplary teachers will be recruited for an "innovative, field-based training program" leading to Virginia administrative endorsement, according to VCU officials

in the school district's newsletter, *In Focus*. Fifteen mentor leaders will work with participants in the program.

"This is a different approach to leadership development," said Richmond Schools Superintendent Yvonne Brandon. "The traditional preparation program is part-time, after school and course-based with a student-designed internship."

But Brandon notes that Project ALL is a model that is "compressed, competency-based and supported by authentic activities that stimulate the job, including an on-the-job, one-year apprenticeship program."

Charlotte School Honored

At Beverly Woods Elementary in Charlotte, N.C., all students are given diversity training, beginning in kindergarten, to assist them in understanding and accepting students with special needs. This diversity training is one of the reasons the school was one of only 10 in the nation selected as a 2009 National School of Character.

The winning schools were selected by the nonprofit organization Character Education Partnership (CEP) for demonstrating that high-quality character education initiatives can transform a school and lead to increased academic achievement.

All of the schools chosen for the award have narrowed the achievement gap and built strong partnerships.



Columbus Levy Buys 'Green' School Buses

Ohio's Columbus City Schools recently unveiled the first of 137 new school buses purchased with funds generated from an operating levy approved by voters last November. The buses contain cleaner-running engines that reduce black smoke and soot, decreasing the level of pollutants generated by the district's bus fleet. The buses also include a number of safety features such as fire-retardant seats, roof-escape hatches and anti-lock brakes. District officials estimate the new environmentally efficient or "green" buses will save the school system approximately \$300,000 in maintenance costs.

Presidential Scholars *continued from page 6*

ceptionally well on the SAT or ACT college-entrance exams. For the arts component of the program, students are chosen based on their artistic ability.

Presidential Scholars were chosen from approximately 2,600 candidates, who were invited to apply to the program. Subsequently, candidates compete after submitting various materials, such as essays and transcripts, for review.

Students chosen to be Presidential Scholars receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., and are awarded the Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

Inspiration Award *continued from page 9*

Says College Board President Gaston Caperton of the 2009 winners, "Because of the unique programs they have created, teachers, parents, community organizations and local businesses have come together to help students graduate from high school and go on to college."

Each year, the College Board honors three secondary schools in the nation for creating an academic environment and culture in which success in the classroom is considered "cool."

Murrah High is the only big-city school to win the 2009 Inspiration Award. The other winning schools are in Hidalgo, Texas, and Riverdale, Calif.

Two Students Win Awards for Helping The Homeless

A graduating senior in Orlando, Fla., led a group of 40 high school students to write and publish a book about homelessness after she experienced homelessness herself.

An eighth-grader in Shreveport, La., throws birthday parties every month for children staying at a local homeless shelter.

Both of these students were recently named among the nation's top 10 youth volunteers in the 14th Annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program.

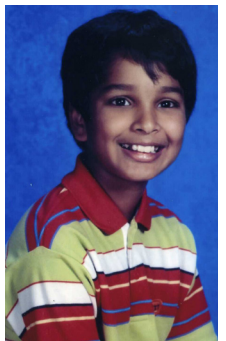
Shardy Camargo of Orlando's Maynard Evans High School and Sean Nathan of Shreveport's Cad-do Parish Middle Magnet School, as well as the other eight winners, were honored for making a positive difference in their communities through volunteerism.

Camargo encouraged fellow students to write a book to raise awareness of the homeless. The student authors interviewed 30 adults in a homeless shelter, culminating in the book *Everyone Has a Story to Tell*, published in 2007.

She led the project after being homeless herself a few years ago. "During my freshman year in high school, we lost everything we had, and my mother took me out of



Shardy Camargo



Sean Nathan

Two Students *continued on page 12*



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Omaha Educator Honored for Work With English Language Learners

Susan Mayberger, coordinator of ESL and Migrant Education in Nebraska's Omaha Public Schools, recently won the inaugural Award for Outstanding Contributions to English Language Learner Achievement, sponsored by McGraw-Hill Education and the Council of the Great City Schools.

She was presented the \$1,000 award at the Council's Bilingual, Immigrant and Refugee Education Directors Meeting in May in Minnesota's Twin Cities.

The award program was launched to recognize an educator in an urban school district represented by the Council who has made a significant difference in improving the academic achievement of English Language Learners.

Mayberger has built a program in the Omaha school system that supports ELL students with rigorous learning experiences that have led to academic progress over the past five years.



Council Executive Director Michael Casserly, right, presents Susan Mayberger with the Award for Outstanding Contributions to English Language Learner Achievement as Arthur Griffin from McGraw-Hill Education looks on.

"We need more like her to help English Language Learners to achieve academic success," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Arthur Griffin Jr., senior vice president of McGraw-Hill Education, noted, "It was difficult to choose from so many deserving submissions, but it's clear that Ms. Mayberger has truly set the standard for excellence for districts across the nation."

Two Students *continued from page 11*

school until she could find a stable place to live," she explained.

Sean, 14, began thinking of holding birthday parties for the homeless after he and his brother were playing Christmas carols at a local shelter. "Afterwards, one of the kids told us that he never got to celebrate his birthday," Sean pointed out. "I was shocked."

He asked the coordinator of the shelter if he and his brother could host birthday parties for the homeless children. "It gives me great satisfaction to watch the kids have parties that they did not have for the first years of their lives," he said.

The nation's 10 top youth volunteers were selected from 20,000 applicants across the country. They received \$5,000 cash awards and \$5,000 grants from the Prudential Foundation for charities of their choice among other prizes.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program is supported by several national education, youth and service organizations, including the Council of the Great City Schools.