



Urban Educator

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SPECIAL
Graduation Edition

Third News Publication Ranks Urban Schools Among the Best

Eight urban schools from districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools rank in the top 20 of *Newsweek's* recent rankings of "America's Best High Schools."

All but two schools in *Newsweek* – Magnet High School for Advanced Studies in Miami-Dade County and Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies in Richmond, Va. -- are also ranked in the top 20 of big-city schools in the *Washington Post's* "America's Most Challenging High Schools" analysis and *U.S. News & World Report's* "2013 Best High Schools" listing.

Newsweek ranked the best 2,000 public high schools in the nation, many of them

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Cleveland Poised To Transform Schools

The Cleveland Teachers Union recently approved a new three-year contract with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District that throws open the door for the school system to advance its Cleveland Plan for Transformation.

"Reaching agreement in our contract negotiations before the end of the school year means that all of us can put our focus on where it needs to be – on fully implementing the Cleveland Plan," Schools CEO Eric Gordon said in Cleveland's newspaper, *The Plain Dealer*.

Cleveland Schools continued on page 12



Twins Trai and Gregg Harris attend their graduation ceremony from Meadowdale High School in Dayton, Ohio. Trai was the class valedictorian and Gregg was the salutatorian.

Dayton Twins Ranked No. 1 and No. 2

Trai and Gregg Harris are twins and members of the Meadowdale High School Class of 2013 in Dayton, Ohio, where they both participated in the rigorous International Baccalaureate program. They were also members of the school's football and track teams.

And the twins share another similarity. They have graduated at the top of the class, with Trai being named valedictorian and Gregg being tied for salutatorian.

The International Baccalaureate is an internationally recognized program with a rigorous curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking and world studies. Even though participating in the program, along with playing sports, has been challenging, the Harris brothers were up to it.

"IB's tough, but has a lot of benefits that outweigh the rigor," said Trai in an interview with the *Dayton Daily News*.

In the fall, the two brothers will head their separate ways. Trai will study mechanical engineering at Ohio's Wright State University and Gregg will attend Skidmore College in New York.

Dayton Schools Superintendent Lori Ward said the brothers' success can be attributed to their parents belief in public education and investing in the partnership from kindergarten to graduation.

"These young men also leave a legacy that is so needed to encourage African American male students to develop their full potential. We are proud of both of them," said Ward.

Council Awards Math, Science Scholarships

Four 2013 high school graduates recently emerged as winners of the highly competitive ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Math and Science Scholarships, awarded by the Council of the Great City Schools.

They were selected from several hundred applicants demonstrating high academic performance, leadership qualities and community involvement.

Created by former NASA astronaut Dr. Bernard Harris Jr., the first African American to walk in space, and the ExxonMobil Foundation, the scholarship program is intended to

help underrepresented students pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies and increase diversity in the STEM workforce.

The awards are given annually to two African-American and two Hispanic seniors from high schools in the 66 urban school districts represented by the Council.

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

■ Lorena Benitez, Atlantic Community High School, Palm Beach County School District;

■ Malik Hollingsworth, Central High School, Memphis City Schools;

■ Rachel Katz, Lincoln High School, Portland Public Schools (Oregon); and

■ Sergio Puleri, Dr. Phillips High School, Orange County Public Schools (Orlando).

In the fall, Benitez will attend Harvard University to study biology. Hol-

Council Awards continued on page 3



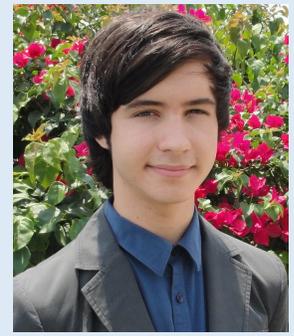
Lorena Benitez



Mailk Hollingsworth



Rachel Katz



Sergio Puleri



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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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Former NFL Coach and Military Veteran to Address Council



Tony Dungy

Former professional football player and coach Tony Dungy, author of the bestselling book *Quiet Strength and Uncommon*, will address the nation's urban school leaders at the Council of the Great City Schools'

57th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 30-Nov. 3, in Albuquerque.

The noted National Football League coach led the Indianapolis Colts to Super Bowl victory in 2007, the first African American coach to win one of the biggest sports events in the nation.

He established another NFL first by leading his teams to the playoffs for 10 consecutive years.

Since retiring from coaching in 2008, Dungy has been an analyst on NBC's *Football Night in America*. He also serves



as national spokesman for the fatherhood program "All Pro Dad and Internet Essentials" from Comcast.

He has been involved in a variety of charitable organizations, including the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Mentors for Life, Boys & Girls Clubs and the Prison Crusade Ministry.

Another Guest Speaker

Hosted by the Albuquerque Public Schools, the conference will also introduce a military veteran, author and motivational speaker who has spoken in hundreds of schools, colleges, corporations and government agencies.

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Council Awards *continued from page 2*

lingsworth is going to Vanderbilt University to pursue a career in design engineering, and Katz will study engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Puleri plans to major in computer programming or engineering at University of Florida.

"These young men and women will have an opportunity to become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow thanks to the generous support of ExxonMobil and the encouragement of Dr. Harris," said Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

"I am proud to support the development of innovative young minds and honor these students as they create a brighter future for themselves and our nation," said Dr. Harris.

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

Interim Leaders to Take Reins Of Baltimore and Boston Schools

Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Andrés Alonso in May announced his retirement after six years of leading an aggressive reform agenda.

He plans to return home to New Jersey to take care of his aging parents and commute to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he has been named "professor of practice" to help develop future school district and education leaders.

"Dr. Alonso sparked the sense of urgency and the collaborative spirit that now has an entire city rallying around its kids in a way we haven't seen before here in Baltimore," said Neil Duke, chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, in a press statement.

"Under Dr. Alonso, we have laid a foundation for sustained improvement...."

After Alonso steps down June 30, the school district's chief of staff, Tisha Edwards, becomes interim CEO. "She knows what it takes to get the work done and, in conjunction with the strong senior leader-

ship team Dr. Alonso has assembled, she will make sure this transition is smooth and productive," the board chair emphasized.

In Boston, the school board named Chief Financial Officer John McDonough interim superintendent after Superintendent Carol Johnson in April announced she would retire this summer. She has led Boston Public Schools since 2007 and last year won the nation's highest honor in urban-school leadership, the Richard R. Green Award, from the Council of the Great City Schools.

"I am pleased that John McDonough has been named our interim superintendent," Johnson said in a press release. "It is rare to find a chief financial officer who combines extraordinary fiscal knowledge and skill with a deep understanding of how resources support the academic work in schools."

In 2005, the Council recognized McDonough by bestowing on him the Bill Wise Award as a leading chief financial officer in an urban school district.

Wichita Teen Journeys From Homelessness To College



John Castellaw

John Castellaw, a student at South High School in Wichita, Kan., spent his younger years homeless, often sleeping in cars.

But in the fall he will have a new place to call home: the University of Kansas where he received a \$20,000 scholarship.

When Castellaw, 19, was growing up, his mother had a substance abuse problem, which often led to him and his younger brother and sister being homeless. When he was 6, his mother left him and his siblings at a Las Vegas children's home, and after staying in foster homes for a few months, their grandmother took them in.

She eventually lost her home in Las Vegas and the family moved to Ohio, New Mexico and then Wichita, where they sometimes lived with extended family.

"We've really never had a place to call home," said Castellaw in an interview with the *Wichita Eagle*. But he has not let this prevent him from succeeding at South High School, where he participated in several sports, was elected class president for three years, served on the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, and was this year's student body president.

Castellaw received a Hixson Opportunity Award, a \$20,000 scholarship given to students to attend the University of Kansas who have faced personal challenges and financial hardship.

He remembers the times his family was unable to afford to see a doctor, and as a result wants to become a doctor and open a clinic.

Wichita Schools Superintendent John Allison praised Castellaw for excelling aca-

Wichita Teen continued on page 5



Philadelphia Student Battles Cancer With Optimistic Attitude



Courtney Simmons

Shortly after starting her first year at Philadelphia's Constitution High School, Courtney Simmons learned through genetic testing that she was at increased risk of contracting

cancer – the same disease that her mother was fighting, the same battle that claimed her sister years earlier.

Simmons shared the news with English teacher Alison McCartney, expressing some concern over her odds, but also relief

that her little brother's tests were negative.

"I have never met anyone, let alone a student, who has triumphed over adversity like Courtney has," says McCartney. "She has done it so gracefully and proudly. She's overcome things that other people have never even thought of, and she's done it all with a smile on her face."

Simmons' sister died of brain cancer in 2007. Her mother died in 2011 from cancer in her thigh. Ten days later, Simmons, now 18, learned that she had bone cancer in her left knee.

While in and out of hospitals undergoing chemotherapy, surgery and rehab, she kept up with her studies, just as her mother would have wanted.

Philadelphia Student continued on page 6

Presidential Scholars Named



Ronald Laracuate

Ronald Laracuate is a senior at Florida's Broward County Public Schools' Coral Glades High School. After receiving acceptance letters from several Ivy League institutions

such as Yale, Princeton and Columbia, he will attend Harvard University in the fall.

Laracuate is one of 16 big-city school students who have been named 2013 U.S.

Presidential Scholars. The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, appointed by the president, honors 141 high school seniors from around the nation who have demonstrated leadership, scholarship, and contribution to school and community.

Students in Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Las Vegas, Memphis, Miami, New Orleans, New York, and Portland (Ore.) were recognized.

Created in 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program every year recognizes students across the nation who are considered distinguished graduating seniors academically and artistically.

Albuquerque Student Earns Highest GPA In District History



Katherine Cordwell

Katherine Cordwell, a 2013 graduate of Manzano High School in Albuquerque, N.M., accomplished many things during her senior year. She was valedictorian of her high school, earned 19 college credits from the University of New Mexico and has been offered nearly half a million dollars in scholarships. And if that wasn't enough, she graduated with a 5.0 grade-point average (GPA), the highest GPA in Albuquerque Public Schools' history.

A straight A student, Cordwell took 20 honors and Advanced Placement classes.

Albuquerque Schools Superintendent Winston Brooks said Cordwell's 5.0 GPA not only made her the valedictorian of her high school but also the valedictorian of the Albuquerque school system. "...She also is representative of so many of our students who take challenging classes, work hard, earn good grades and prepare themselves for success in college and careers," said Brooks.

In the fall, Cordwell will attend the University of Maryland and major in math.

Wichita Teen continued from page 4

demically and athletically despite the odds.

"As a member of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, his leadership skills and work ethic helped him earn the respect and acknowledgment of his peers," wrote Allison in an email to the *Urban Educator*. "I have no doubt he will achieve his goal of becoming a doctor and opening a clinic to serve those less fortunate in our community."

Santa Ana Student Chooses the Right Path



Jonathan Chinchilla

When Jonathan Chinchilla was growing up in the often-violent streets of Santa Ana, Calif., he recognized that there were three life choices that awaited him.

The first path was to drop out of school and join a gang like many of his peers. But he didn't want to end up in the emergency room with a stab wound a few inches away from his heart like others he knew.

The second path before him was to get involved in drugs. "I had already lost a few of my friends to this dark road," Chinchilla recalled.

Instead he opted for the third path, which was to stay in school and excel at

academics. "I chose to care about my future and push my intellectual abilities," said Chinchilla.

And he has done exactly that, maintaining a 4.5 grade-point-average at Segerstrom High School, while taking a heavy load of Advanced Placement and honors courses. He has achieved excellent grades even while being involved in marching band and varsity football, requiring him to get up at 5:30 a.m. each morning in order to catch the bus by 6:10 a.m.

Chinchilla's algebra teacher calls him a "quiet rock star, who remains humble, kind and never flaunts his achievements. Once he opens up, he is a star student that every teacher wants in his class."

As a result of choosing that third path of staying in school, Chinchilla, who has dreams of becoming an engineer, will attend the University of California-Irvine in the fall.

Dallas Student Overcomes Language Barrier



Karen Trevino

When Karen Trevino came to the United States from Mexico, she spoke no English and found herself frustrated in her fifth-grade class at a Dallas elementary

school. But there was one subject where her inability to speak English didn't hamper her, and that was math.

Trevino's keen understanding of math allowed her to make connections with words and patterns, and as she learned more about math, she was able to make connections to the English language.

"Math is such a universal language, and I learned to communicate with my teachers through math," said Trevino. She also

spent long hours studying and learning to overcome the language barrier.

As a result, Trevino will not only graduate with a diploma from Trinidad "Trini" Garza Early College High School as valedictorian of the 2013 class, but will also leave with an associate degree in science she earned from Mountain View College.

A member of the National Honor Society, Trevino credits her high school, which was awarded the Excellence in Urban Education Award by the National Center of Urban School Transformation in 2012, in helping her to excel.

"When you come to Trini, the teachers truly want you to succeed," said Trevino. "They give you that mentality of success for college and high school."

And the young girl who came to this country unable to speak English and frustrated with school, will enter the University of Texas in the fall and major in engineering.

Baltimore Student Realizes Dream

When Heman Rai was younger, his father used to tell him stories of scientists and how they changed the world, so when someone would ask him what he wanted to be, he would always say a scientist. But at the time, Rai thought it was impossible because he was born in a Bhutanese refugee camp in Nepal.

The United States began a resettlement program for Bhutanese refugees and in 2008, Rai and his family resettled in Baltimore.

He enrolled in the 8th grade and was placed in an English-as-a-second-language class where he felt at home because there were students from different countries and even his own camp in Nepal. Rai struggled with English, but the more he practiced the easier the language became for him.

In only five years since arriving in this country, Rai has made great progress. At

Digital Harbor High School, he enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and joined the soccer and wrestling teams, all while holding a part-time job to help support his family.



Heman Rai and his father

He has received several scholarships, which he will use to attend Loyola University of Maryland this fall.

Rai's journey from refugee to college student was recently featured on the [Open Society Institute-Baltimore website](#), where he explained how he relates to the expression: 'It does not matter where you start, but what matters is where you will end.'

"I didn't start well, not because I chose this, but because I was born in a difficult situation; but what I can do is work hard, keep my grades high, and get a college degree," wrote Rai.

As a result, his childhood desire of becoming a scientist is no longer impossible.

Shooting Victim Not Deterred from College

Sharnika Glasby, a 2013 graduate of Phelps Architecture Construction and Engineering High School in Washington, D.C., will attend Penn State in the fall to study engineering. But her journey to college almost didn't happen.

A few months ago, she was walking home from school when a masked gunman ordered her to give him her bag. Seconds later, the man shot her and her pant leg was soaked with blood.

"It was flowing down my leg," said Glasby in an interview with WAMU 88.5 radio. "It was like, am I going to die from this."

She was rushed to the hospital and had to miss a month of school. Before the incident, Glasby was an honor roll student and

an athlete who participated in softball, volleyball and track and sang in the choir.

But the weeks she missed in school caused her grades to suffer and she began viewing people she didn't know with suspicion.

Yet with the help of her friends and the staff at school, she began to heal, especially when she started receiving acceptance letters from colleges.

And the 18-year-old who had a harrowing experience can now look

back on the incident and be grateful that the person who shot her didn't take the bag she was carrying. The bag held the documents she had to submit so her transcripts could be sent to colleges she was applying to.



Sharnika Glasby
Photo Credit: Kavitha Cardoza

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"My mom always wanted me to do well in school," says Simmons. "I know that trying my hardest in school and doing all of my assignments is what would make her happy. I just try to do everything to make my mom proud."

Because of her experiences, Simmons, who was honored as the district's Senior of the Month in February, plans to become a pediatric oncology nurse. She will enter St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia this fall and hopes to start a nonprofit organization for children fighting cancer – Supporting Survivorship and Soul, or SSAS – to give them a sense of belonging.

"Remember that no matter how bad a situation is," she says, "it can always get better. You can turn anything negative into a positive."

Nominees Sought For Top Education Award



Richard R. Green

The 2013 top award for urban education leadership will be given to a current or former school board member from one of the districts represented by the Council of the Great City Schools.

Nominees are sought for the Richard R. Green Award, named in honor of the first African-American chancellor of the New York City school system, who had also headed Minneapolis Public Schools in the 1980s.

Sponsored by the Council, ARAMARK Education and Cambium Learning Group, the award is given in alternating years to an outstanding school board member and superintendent from 66 of the largest urban school systems in the nation.

It will be presented at the Council's Annual Fall Conference in October in Albuquerque. Deadline for applications, which can be accessed at <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/50>, is July 26.



Birmingham Teacher Wins Teacher of the Year



Alison Grizzle

Equipped with degrees in mathematics and English, Alison Grizzle took her talent and joined the ranks of educators instead of deciding on a career path in the financial sector.

Since 1999, she has taught math in Birmingham City Schools, including courses such as Advanced Placement statistics. Understanding the varying needs of urban students, Grizzle spends many evenings

and weekends in tutoring and study sessions to ensure they stay on track.

It is this commitment to her students' individual success that garnered Grizzle's recent 2013-2014 Alabama Teacher of the Year award.

Grizzle is a National Board Certified teacher who teaches math at Jackson-Olin High School. According to Grizzle, her greatest rewards come at the end of the school year when students receive the results of their graduation exam.

"My students come running and screaming with hugs and tears and are ecstatic to see the word 'pass' by mathematics. It is that day I see the fruits of my labor," she stated.

Grizzle will represent Alabama state in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

Urban Schools Win Inspiration Award

At Edna Karr High School in New Orleans, almost 90 percent of students live at or below the poverty line, but in 2012 more than 90 percent of seniors graduated and more than 80 percent went on to attend college.

As a result, Edna Karr High School was presented with a 2013 Gaston Caperton Inspiration Award. Sponsored by the College Board, the award honors three high schools that provide low-income students with the support they need to succeed academically.

Another big-city school to receive the award was the Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies. The school has strong parent organizations, offers a variety of rigorous college-level courses and has a 99 percent college-going rate among minority students.

Each of the winning schools will receive a \$25,000 award to apply toward programs that encourage students to attend college.

Selected by a panel of higher education staff, winning high schools demonstrated significant growth in the number of students taking honors and college-level courses and in the percentage of seniors accepted to two- or four-year colleges.

Urban Teachers Win \$25,000 Teaching Prize



Josalyn Tresvant

A graduate of Memphis City Schools, Josalyn Tresvant gave up a career in banking to become a special education teacher at Memphis' Knight Road Elementary School.



Javier Velazquez

Originally trained as an architect at MIT, Javier Velazquez is a math teacher at Chicago's Howe School of Excellence.

These two teachers were among four teach-

ers awarded the 2013 Fishman Prize for Superlative Classroom Practice by TNTP, a non-profit education organization. The award honors excellent teachers who teach in high-poverty schools.

Winning teachers receive \$25,000 and participate in a summer residency program with TNTP.

The Fishman Prize was established in 2011 and is named for Shira Fishman, a TNTP-trained math teacher currently teaching at McKinley Technology High School in Washington, DC. This year more than 570 teachers from 42 states submitted applications for consideration.

Milwaukee School Wins ACT Award

Rufus King International School in Milwaukee was recently awarded ACT's first College and Career Transition Award.

The award recognized the school for its exemplary college and career readiness efforts to ensure students have the skill sets needed to enroll and succeed in college-level coursework.

Schools were nominated by states based on criteria such as demonstrated student growth; aggregate ACT scores; the percentage of students meeting college-readiness benchmarks; and demonstrated success in serving underrepresented students.

Los Angeles Schools Place No. 1 and No. 2 In U.S. Academic Decathlon

Students at Granada Hills Charter High School in Los Angeles celebrated a “three-peat” after winning their third consecutive title as U.S. Academic Decathlon champions. The victory earned the Los Angeles Unified School District its 14th national title.

More than 450 students from the United States and London gathered to compete in the 2013 competition held in Minneapolis.

Granada Hills’ nine-member team scored 54,652.93 points out of 66,000, beating 52 other high school academic decathlon teams.

Placing second in the competition was the team from El Camino Real Charter High School in Los Angeles.

“In having the top two teams in the country, LAUSD this year exceeded our own amazingly high standards in the academic decathlon,” said Los Angeles Schools Superintendent John Deasy in a news statement.

The academic decathlon is a team competition in which students battle their intellectual skills with students from other schools. They are tested in 10 categories: art, economics, essay, interview, language and literature, mathematics, music, science, social science and speech.

Miami School Wins Magnet Award

Herbert A. Ammons Middle School in Miami recently received the Dr. Donald Waldrip Secondary Magnet School of Excellence Award as the most exemplary secondary magnet school in the nation. The award was sponsored by Magnet Schools of America (MSA).

In addition, Tere Pujol-Burns, a teacher at Sunset Elementary School in Miami, was named the 2013 National Teacher-of-the-Year by MSA.

Nashville Students Launch Record Label

Not too many schools have their own recording studio and there are few, if any schools, who have a student-run record label, but Pearl-Cohen Entertainment Magnet High School in Nashville has both.

The \$1.2 million state-of-the-art recording studio and student-run record label is the result of Music Makes Us, a joint effort among the district, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean’s Office and music industry and community leaders to make Nashville’s music education program the best in the nation.



Three Pearl-Cohn students (left to right) accept a signed Gibson guitar in honor of the grand opening of the school’s music label. With the students are music group The Farm and singer Tom Gossin. Photo credit: Gary Layda

The student-run record label will have distribution in conjunction with Warner Music Nashville and will be modeled after a corporate music label. Each year, a Pearl-Cohen student will be named head of the label. Pearl-Cohen students will sign, record and promote student artists from the school system, and revenue generated from the school’s record label through the sale of songs will go to advancing music education through Music Makes Us.

Portland School Wins Constitution Contest

Grant High School in Portland, Ore., scored its first national win in the 26th annual We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution competition held recently in Washington, D.C.

Schools representing 45 states qualified for the national academic competition by placing first in their state.

Students participated in three days of simulated congressional hearings that tested their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. During the hearings, groups of students testified as constitutional experts before panels of judges who acted as congressional committees.

Council Conference *continued from page 3*



Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch

Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch will share her experience of becoming an effective leader after being born and raised in a small barrio in Laredo, Tex., where she overcame poverty, discrimination and illiteracy.

When she graduated from college, Kickbusch joined the U.S. Army as an officer, breaking barriers and setting records in the military where she became the highest-ranking Hispanic woman in the Combat Support Field of the Army.

Subsequently, the 22-year veteran turned down a command post and retired to honor her mother’s dying wish to return to her roots and become a community leader. She also founded and is president of her own business --Educational Achievement Services, Inc.

Registration is now available for the Fall Conference at: <http://www.cgcs.org/domain/21>.



Superintendent Green, second from right, participates in a surprise celebration at an elementary school to unveil a banner recognizing the district's national recognition.

North Carolina's Guilford County Schools Named 'National District of Character'

North Carolina's third largest school system, Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, has been named 2013 National District of Character by the Washington, D.C.-based Character Education Partnership (CEP).

It is one of only three school districts nationwide to be recognized as part of CEP's National Schools and Districts of Character Program. And it's the only urban school system among the other two honorees -- Hanover Park Regional High School District in East Hanover, N.J., and Orono Public Schools in Long Lake, Minn.

The Guilford School district competed

among 131 schools and districts across the country.

"It is a big honor to win this national recognition," said Guilford Schools Superintendent Maurice "Mo" Green in a press statement. "We launched our character development program in 2010 with three fundamentals: character education, service-learning and civic education. Since then, our students and staff have embraced the concepts, and it is having a positive impact on academics, student behavior and school culture."

All 124 Guilford County public schools are engaged in character development and service-learning.

Memphis Civil Rights Icon Dies

Maxine Smith, a civil rights icon for many years in Memphis, died recently at age 83.

Not only was she known as the long-time executive secretary of the Memphis NAACP, she had served on the Memphis school board from 1972 to 1995, winning

the Council of the Great City Schools' highest honor for urban-school leadership, the Richard R. Green Award, in 1997.

"She was a civil rights and education pioneer in paving the way beyond segregation in Memphis," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Nashville District Develops Diversity Management Plan

Tennessee's Metro Nashville Public Schools has taken a hard look at what diversity might look like in a modern, globalized society, asking the question: How can school districts promise diversity without resorting to busing, quotas or closing schools?

In February, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education approved what it calls a Diversity Management Plan, developed by the school system in consultation with



Cheryl Mayes

an outside expert in student assignment and integration that demonstrates a commitment to diversity.

"We know from experience the richness diversity can bring to education,"

says Board Chair Cheryl Mayes.

"That's why we developed this plan. We want to ensure our students get everything they can out of their years in school, and that includes a vibrant and diverse social experience."

The plan gives definitions for diversity of students and staff and a blueprint for reaching those goals in every single school. Those definitions are multi-faceted, dealing not just with race, but with income, language and disability.



Jesse Register

"We are a district without a majority race," says Director of Schools Jesse Register, noting that the Nashville

school system is diverse and desegregated. "Seventy-one percent of our students come from economically disadvantaged homes. We have some 11,000

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Senate Education Committee Reports Out ESEA Reauthorization Bill on Party Line Vote

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

The Senate Education Committee approved S. 1094, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill, on a 12 to 10 party-line vote in mid-June. The Council of the Great City Schools issued a detailed letter on the measure, pointing to some positive features of the bill and highlighting a number of burdensome and impractical provisions in the 1,150-page package.

Positive provisions included language allowing states to continue performance targets adopted under the Department of Education's waivers, and restricting the use of statistical gimmicks (such as large N sizes) that permitted small and non-diverse school districts to evade accountability for low-performing groups. The bill also eliminated the unproductive 20 percent Supplemental Educational Services and choice expenditure set-asides from the ESEA. And, the Committee bill took a step forward in designing a better mix of local, state, and federal accountability and improvement measures than in the 2011 version of the bill.

At the same time, the reform activities specified in the bill are primarily driven from the state where instructional expertise and commitment to poor and minority communities generally remain weak. The Committee bill replicates the four-tier, NCLB-like series of improvement measures, with many schools cascading over time from the first tier to the second tier and from the third tier to the fourth. Schools would face increasingly prescriptive state-determined sanctions as well as federally-mandated reform models in the final tier.

In addition, the new state-established achievement targets for subgroups, grade levels, and subjects along with growth metrics by subject, English-proficiency growth rates, and graduation measures would result in more "accountability cells" than under the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provisions under NCLB. This will increase the prospect that schools will be subject to more school-accountability sanctions over time. Moreover, other mandates and new data



collection and cross-tabulation requirements in Title I (including some unrelated to the Title I program) are a significant concern because of their administrative burden.

The Council also voiced concern over allowing the landmark Title I program to become a "catch-all" for a litany of activities, such as mental health services, parenting teen programs, and school crisis planning, that may be needed but are only tangentially related to the mission of improving the academic attainment of poor and minority children and that receive financial support from other sources.

The Committee bill also contains an historic expansion of Title I law that requires "supports and interventions" in many non-Title I schools, even though Title I funds cannot be used to support these new federally-mandated activities in such schools. And the Committee bill includes a major expansion of federal law by changing the current "comparability of services" provision into a "comparability of expenditures" requirement. Since the vast majority of school-level expenditures are comprised of teacher salaries, Title I schools with average teacher salaries that are less than the average salaries of non-Title I schools would be required to make up the difference by increasing or reallocating local and state funds, or if allowable under the teacher contracts, redeploy teachers based on salary level rather than effectiveness. The total number of dollars that would need to be shuffled in the Great City Schools and other districts would be substantial. The Council ultimately concluded that the Senate Committee bill was not a major improvement over the current law with the Department of Education's flexibility waivers.

On the other side of the Capitol, the House Education Committee is slated to consider its version of the ESEA reauthorization, H.R. 5, on June 19. The House Committee bill generally mirrors its 2012 version that the Council did not support. The outlook for further action after the House and Senate Committee votes remains uncertain.



Wichita Students' Flying Challenge

Some 70 students from Brooks Technology and Arts Magnet Middle School in Wichita, Kan., were recently flying high as they concluded their yearlong Airbus Flying Challenge. The program, which partnered students with Airbus engineers and engineering students from Wichita State University, concluded with a flight over their hometown. For many students, it was the first time they had flown. The partnership encouraged students to learn about careers in aviation and how to apply math, science and engineering in their daily lives.

Nashville District *continued from page 9*

students who speak languages other than English at home. The question becomes how do we constructively manage that diversity.”

For a school to satisfy the requirements for student diversity, it must meet a four-part definition, beginning with at least one of three expectations for racial and ethnic makeup:

- No majority race in the school population; or
- Enroll at least three racial/ethnic groups with each representing at least 15 percent of the school's total enrollment; or
- Enroll at least two racial/ethnic groups with each representing 30 percent of the school's total enrollment.

The other three elements of the definition dictate that schools maintain percentages of students comparable to district averages in students eligible for free and reduced meals, English language services and students classified with a disability.

Instead of using student assignment practices to shuffle students around the city, the plan relies on choices made by students and their families based on opportunities available.

The director of schools hopes the Nashville plan can serve as a model for other school districts facing diversity challenges. “It really adds a lot of value to our students' education,” says Register. “And I hope it lays the groundwork for a more tolerant and multicultural future.”

School Bus Driver Takes Students on Literary Journey

A few months ago, Letisha “Tish” Joyner, a 13-year veteran bus driver in North Carolina's Guilford County Schools, noticed a young bus rider's tears.

The child was comforted when an older student sat with and read to the pre-kindergarten student, who was struggling with leaving home each morning.

This gave Joyner an idea that has inspired a program called Reading Riders on Bus 910 serving Jamestown Elementary School, which pairs older students with younger ones to read together on the bus four days a week.

“Miss Tish is not only helping to improve student literacy, but she's also helping to improve student behavior, increase student self-esteem and motivate the most reluctant of readers,” says Principal Kim Fleming.



Bus driver Letisha Joyner with students.

Miami CIO Wins Council Award

Deborah Karcher, chief information officer for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, was recently presented with the Distinguished Service Award at the Council of the Great Schools' Chief Information Officers Conference in Las Vegas.

Sponsored by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, the award honors distinguished service in urban education.



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Urban Schools *continued from page 1*

urban schools, in preparing college-ready graduates. The big-city schools in Council districts in the top 20 are:

- School of Science/Engineering in Dallas, No. 4;
- The School for the Talented and Gifted in Dallas, No. 5;
- Magnet High School for Advanced Studies in Miami-Dade County, No. 6;
- Suncoast Community High School in Palm Beach County, No. 9;
- Stanton College Prep in Jacksonville, FL, No. 10;
- American Indian Public High School in Oakland, Calif., No. 11
- Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies in Richmond, Va., No. 14; and
- Academic Magnet High School in North Charleston, S.C., No. 20.

Oakland Unified School District's American Indian School and Dallas Independent School District's Talented and Gifted school ranked No. 1 in the *Washington Post* and *U.S. News & World Report*, respectively.

Cleveland Schools *continued from page 1*

After the union ratified the contract, Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, stressed in a *Plain Dealer* commentary that the accord "succeeds where so many past agreements have failed – in supporting the best teachers instead of protecting the worst."

He added, "And it builds on a set of groundbreaking reforms that have put the district in a unique position as an innovator among districts nationwide and a school system on the verge of dramatic transformation and improvement."

Casserly served as an adviser during the contract negotiations.

Great City Grads



Dennis Walcott

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Education**