



Rochester Schools Leader Named Nation's Superintendent of the Year

Manuel Rivera became a teacher in New York's Rochester City School District in 1975 and has moved up the career ladder to currently head the school system.

The district where he launched his education career is now the place where he has achieved his greatest success as Rivera recently became the 2006 National Superintendent of the Year.

One of the nation's highest honors for school district superintendents was presented by the American Association of School Administrators and ARAMARK Education.

He was chosen among top state superintendents named by AASA.

Rivera has been the superintendent of Rochester's 46,700-student school system since 2003, but it is actually the second time he has led the district.

In 1991, he was the superintendent, but he left in 1994 to take a position with Edison Schools, Inc. In 2002, he returned to the district to serve as interim



Manuel Rivera

superintendent and after a national search, he became the permanent leader.

During his tenure, Rivera has raised academic performance and instituted a school redesign plan establishing pre-K through grade 6 elementary schools and grades 7-9 secondary schools in an effort to provide students with greater stability. He has also established an accountability system for school performance, inte-

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Report Shows Dropout Recovery In Urban Districts

A student drops out of school in America every nine seconds.

About one-third of all students nationally become dropouts.

Some three quarters of America's state prison inmates are dropouts.

These startling statistics have been published in a new study by the American Youth Policy Forum that documents case studies of school districts that have *not* given up on dropouts.

Whatever It Takes – How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth focuses on how innovative educators, policymakers and community leaders across the nation are reconnecting youths who've dropped out to the social and economic mainstream.

"Any sensible school reform effort must embrace both dropout prevention and recovery," says the report, published in cooperation with the Council of the Great City Schools and four other national associations.

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Education Secretary To Speak

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings addresses the nation's urban school leaders March 20 at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference in Washington, scheduled March 18-21.



Margaret Spellings

Deputy Secretary Raymond Simon will set the stage for her when he speaks to urban school leaders on March 19.

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urban Educator

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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San Francisco Names Interim Leader; L.A., Des Moines Heads to Depart

The San Francisco Unified School District has selected veteran educator Gwen Chan as its interim superintendent, the first Chinese American to lead the district.

She takes the reins from Arlene Ackerman, who now holds the title of superintendent emeritus. In September, Ackerman will join Columbia University Teacher's College leadership faculty.

A graduate of the San Francisco school system, Chan has worked in the district for 38 years, beginning her career as a teacher. Before taking the helm, she was the district's deputy superintendent. She has also held positions as associate superintendent for high schools and chief development officer.

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Rochester Leader...

grated technology into instruction, and strengthened the district's financial management and oversight practices.

Rochester board of education president Domingo Garcia praised Rivera for all of his hard work. "This award reflects the leadership and excellence he provides for our students, their families, our staff and the entire community," said Garcia in a press release.

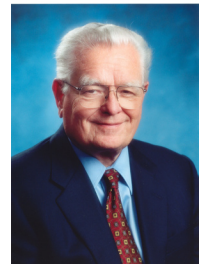
Rivera was one of four finalists for the top honor, based on criteria such as leadership for learning, communication, professionalism and community involvement.

As the award winner, Rivera receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to be presented to a student from his high school alma mater.

"I am honored to be appointed to this position; and as interim superintendent, I will work hard for our students and our entire SFUSD community," said Chan in a news statement.

In another development, Roy Romer, the superintendent of the nation's second largest school district, recently announced he would step down before his contract expires in June 2007.

Romer has been superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District since July 2000, and under his leadership, test scores have improved and a new school construction project has been launched in which 160 new schools will be built by 2012.



Roy Romer

Last year, the 746,610-student district opened 17 new schools—believed to be more than any other school system in the nation, according to district officials.

Before coming to Los Angeles, Romer served as the chairman of the Democratic National Committee and is a former governor of Colorado.

Also stepping down is Eric Witherspoon, the longtime superintendent of Iowa's Des Moines Independent Community School District.

Witherspoon, who has led the 32,000-student school system since 1998, is leaving to take the reins of the Evanston Township High School District in Illinois. Witherspoon will leave the Des Moines district on June 30.

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Dropout Recovery...

Whatever It Takes highlights eight Council districts – Jefferson County (Louisville), Ky.; Austin, Tex.; Salt Lake City, Utah; Portland, Ore.; Oakland, Calif.; Baltimore, Md.; Milwaukee, Wis.; and Philadelphia, Pa.

“We will not give up on any child,” says Marty Bell, deputy to the schools superintendent in Louisville. “It is our job to get each child in the right program with the right teacher.”

The Jefferson County school system has 80 specialized instructional programs to retain and graduate its students, designed to motivate students to succeed. The district also ensures student accountability with advanced use of data.

Mayoral and school district leadership stands out in Philadelphia. “City leaders have created noteworthy opportunities to participate in constructive dialogue about how to reconnect the city’s dropouts,” says the *Whatever It Takes* report.

As a result, city-wide youth planning and funding for community-based organizations, as well as a reintegration initiative for youth leaving the justice system, have made a difference in reclaiming dropouts.

In Portland, Ore., a collaboration of the public school system and community-based organizations contributes to “creative educational options for out-of-school youth,” says the report.

The four other school districts in *Whatever It Takes* are Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio; Trenton, N.J., Pima County (Tucson), Ariz.; and Camden, N.J.

The report can be accessed on the American Youth Policy Forum’s web site at www.aypf.org/publications/WhateverItTakes.html.

Council Names New Research Director

An official of a New York-based nonprofit social policy research group has been named to lead the Council of the Great City Schools’ research department.

Jason Snipes of MDRC, deputy director of the K-12 education policy area, becomes the Council’s new director of research in April, succeeding Sharon Lewis, who recently retired after being at the post since 1997.



Jason Snipes

“I’m very much looking forward to Jason joining the Council to direct and maintain our research program. He has a strong track record in research and will add tremendous skills to a very talented staff,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

Snipes is no stranger to the Council’s work. He was the lead author for MDRC in the collaborative research with the Council to produce the report *Foundations for Success – Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement* in 2002.

At MDRC, Snipes is co-principal investigator for the Closing Achievement Gaps project, lead quantitative analyst for the national evaluation of Project GRAD, and impact analyst for the Career Academies evaluation.

Snipes earned a doctorate in public policy from Harvard University.

Rounding out the Council’s research team will be Adriane Williams, recently appointed research manager, who had been a research specialist with the organization in the late ‘90s. Also joining the research team this past October was Amanda Petteruti, the current research specialist.

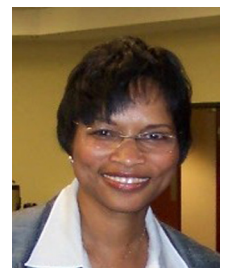
Scholarship Available To Council Districts

For the second year, the Council of the Great City Schools and Texas Instruments offer the Marcia Page Scholarship for African American females interested in pursuing careers in mathematics, engineering or technology fields.

Two \$5,000 scholarships will be awarded to two African American female students currently completing their senior year of high school in school districts that are members of the Council.

In its 2005 inaugural year, the Marcia Page Scholarship, named for a Texas

Instruments executive, was awarded to graduating high school seniors from the Denver Public Schools and Florida’s Orange County Public Schools in Orlando.



Marcia Page

Deadline for students to apply for the 2006 Marcia Page Scholarship is May 15. Applications are available on the Council’s web site at www.cgcs.org.

Ensuring Healthy Students



Jackson District Opens In-School Health Clinics

Jackson Public Schools in Mississippi recently launched seven in-school health clinics aimed at detecting student health problems early to increase student attendance and test scores.

Eight nurses will be available for students in the seven clinics, located in four elementary schools and three middle schools, and in a mobile health unit that will travel around the city.

U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., spearheaded an effort to fund the new health clinics, resulting in a \$1 million single-shot federal appropriation.

Considered seed money, the clinics are expected to become self-sustaining through reimbursements from private insurance, Medicaid and the state's children's health insurance program, said Deputy Schools Superintendent Peggy Crowell in the city's *Clarion Ledger* newspaper.

"Every student deserves a school nurse," said Joyce Vaughn, director of school nurses and health services in the Mississippi Department of Education. "Some {students} are not being seen by physicians at any other time."

The nurses will screen about seven students a day, but will not offer birth control counseling, said Crowell.

She pointed out that parents must sign permission slips for their children to be seen by the school nurses, and parents can accompany their children during screenings.

"We feel good about the program," said Mark Calhoun, father of a third grader, in the *Clarion Ledger*. "We believe it helps identify those children who might have needs who otherwise, because of financial concerns or the fact that parents might be busy in their careers, would go unnoticed for a while."



A student receives an eye exam at a school health clinic.

Miami Partnership To Deliver Health Services to Students

Students in 37 Miami-Dade County public schools will receive enhanced health care services as a result of a partnership between the school district and area health care providers.

Under the School Health Connect partnership, schools will be provided with a team composed of a nurse, a social worker and two health technicians. The team will be responsible for making sure a coordinated level of health care is available at every school.

All schools must have mandated screenings and assessments with appropriate follow-up, a system for dealing with crisis medical situations, appropriate administration of medications and mental health counseling.

The School Health Connect partnership is funded with a \$6 million contribution from The Children's Trust, created by voter referendum in 2002 as a dedicated source of funding to improve the lives of children in Miami-Dade County.

In the fall, the Miami school system and the Miami-Dade County Health Department will realign their existing health care services to children to the School Health Connect model.

The realignment will cost the district \$7 million and The Children's Trust will increase its contribution to \$10 million next year.

District officials expect that within the next three to five years all schools will use the School Health Connect model. The program is estimated to cost approximately \$40 million a year.

New Duval County Superintendent Meets The Press -- but Not the Usual Scribes

“What are your plans for ensuring the improvement of low-performing schools?” asked a reporter at a news conference conducted by Florida’s Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville.

The inquiry was directed at the school system’s new superintendent, Joseph Wise, who had recently taken the reins of the district after heading Delaware’s Christina School District in Wilmington.

He responded that the school district has demonstrated a commitment to “differentiating resources” – moving resources where they are needed most to give schools a boost.

However, he indicated that what’s most important, “Do you believe that all kids can learn and work and perform at high levels? If you don’t, I don’t think you should teach in the school system. I don’t think you should be a student in the school system, and I’m not even sure I’d like it that you as a parent in the school system don’t think that all students can do well.”

Superintendent Wise recently fielded questions from student journalists and student government representatives from the district’s high schools in a one-hour press conference called “Greet the Press.”

The first-time student press event drew some 50 people, many of them bright-eyed students asking serious questions.

“It’s vital to remember that the students should be the focus of all our efforts, and we need to ensure that their voices are heard along with those of par-



Duval Superintendent Joseph Wise (second from right) takes a moment after his student press conference with Terry Parker High School students, left to right, Ben Tucker, newspaper adviser Kathryn Abbruzzese and students Stephanie Hildenbrandt and Brittany Snyder.

ents, teachers, administrators and other community stakeholders,” Wise stressed after the press conference.

“What is the biggest issue in Duval County Schools today?” asked a student government leader.

“We’ve got to get the dropout rate to zero at the same time we get every high school graduate to have a diploma in hand that is truly meaningful,” Wise quickly replied.

Wise took the helm of the Duval County school system in November. It gave him a chance to return home to the place where he attended public school for most of his childhood. He had been a student in the school system from second through eleventh grades before his family moved to South Florida.

“How has the school system changed since you were a student here?” asked another student government leader.

Reminiscing for a moment of his youthful days in Jacksonville, Wise said, “It’s a much better city now than it was back in the day in the ‘60s and ‘70s. I still think prejudice around race and class is an issue in every city in our country. It’s still an issue for Jacksonville that we’ve got to solve.

“But it’s not nearly as bad or blatant as it was when I was here. Jacksonville has made great progress, but not enough,” Wise emphasized.

As for the school system, he indicated that it is so different than when he was growing up. “It’s really hard for high schoolers now. Part of the truth is that it wasn’t nearly as hard for us when I was in school,” he recalls.

“But it should be harder because the world has become harder to compete in,” he explained.

Broadcast live on the local COMCAST cable channel, the student press conference was also covered by news media in the region.

“How can you get parents to be responsible for their children’s behavior and attendance,” asked another student journalist.

“That’s a tough question,” Wise replied. He said some parents need to “wake up” to realize that parenting is a very important job, noting that he doesn’t believe that the majority of Duval County parents need a reminder.

But he’s not sure that schools always present a welcoming posture to parents. “We have to make the schools welcoming!”

CLOSE-UP 

Urban Debate Leagues — A Growing Phenomenon

By Tonya Harris

BALTIMORE—It’s 5:30 p.m. on a Thursday and about 12 students are sitting inside a classroom at The Baltimore Freedom Academy, a high school near downtown Baltimore. The school day has long ended, but the students are in a lively discussion, raising their hands and practically interrupting each other to be heard.

What has the students so engaged? Not the latest hip hop song or video game, but the idea that the United States should substantially decrease its authority either to detain without charge or to search without probable cause.

Discussing such weighty topics is nothing new for these students who are members of the Baltimore Urban Debate League (BUDL). Created in 1999 to improve the academic experience of students by engaging them in debate, the league began with 80 students in eight Baltimore city schools.

Seven years later, BUDL is now one of the most successful urban debate leagues in the nation, serving 750 middle and high school students at 48 Baltimore schools. In 2003, the league was even featured on the popular news show “60 Minutes.”

“The growth of the league has been rapid,” says Pam Spiliadis, BUDL’s executive director. “In the past, debate wasn’t talked about in Baltimore, but now it’s so popular, it’s almost on par with basketball.”

And debate is not only popular in Baltimore but in urban cities across the



Two members of the Baltimore Urban Debate League practice their debating skills.

nation. There are currently urban debate leagues in Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Providence, San Francisco, St. Louis, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

Why are these leagues so popular?

“Because they work,” said Melissa Wade, executive co-director of the National Debate Project, a consortium of five universities working to promote debate as a tool for empowering youth.

Wade started the first urban debate league in 1985 in Atlanta and has helped establish urban debate leagues in cities from New York to Seattle.

“Debate gives kids their voice,” said Wade. “They develop confidence, they start watching the news and reading newspapers because it might affect their debate arguments.”

Jen Johnson, executive director of the Seattle Debate Foundation, has seen a complete 180-degree change in behavior and academics of students who participate in debate.

“There are students who were doing remedial work when they first started and now they are reading law reviews,” said Johnson.

In Baltimore, the results speak for themselves. Ninety percent of BUDL students graduate from high school and 80 percent enroll in post-secondary institutions.

In 2004, the University of Missouri-Kansas City released a study which tested debaters and non-debaters at schools in New York, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis and Seattle, using a standardized reading test designed to meet the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* Act.

The study found that reading scores of the debaters improved by 25 percent more than the non-debaters.

In Atlanta, a study of an after-school debate program for at-risk middle school students found that seventh graders saw their grade-point averages (GPA) improve on average by four points.

“Not only did we see good GPA results, we saw a 50 percent reduction in disciplinary action,” said Wade.

Urban debate leagues are unique in that they often target students with low academic performance.

The Seattle Urban Debate League serves approximately 250 middle and high school students and often recruits students who are struggling academically.

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“I get a lot of discipline referrals,” said Johnson. “I get students who have been suspended more than eight times.”

But for Johnson, recruiting students for the league has been an easy sell. “Debate has become very popular and it’s something cool that not only the chess kids do.”



Leon Ramsey, a member of the Baltimore Urban Debate League, reads from his notes during debate practice.

Urban debate leagues are challenging because they use a rigorous form of debate called policy debate, in which teams of two students debate one current event topic over the course of an entire year.

Teams must do quite a bit of research prior to tournaments, during which they are required to argue both the affirmative and negative sides of the topic. Judges render decisions based on evidence presented and the quality of argumentation.

Students get the opportunity to compete in several city tournaments, and some compete at the state and national level against teams from suburban and private schools.

As urban debate leagues grow, debate is no longer being viewed as just an extracurricular activity, but is being used inside the classroom.

Known as “Debate Across the Curriculum,” this program presents debate as a means that teachers of all subjects can use to engage students in their own learning process.

For example, a history class might debate the causes of World War II, while a science class might examine the NASA space shuttle program.

“One of the high school assessments our students must take is around government,” said Bonnie Copeland, CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System. “Linking debate into the social studies curriculum enhances their ability to learn the necessary skills and concepts.”

Last summer for the first time, the district incorporated debate into a four-week U.S. history course and a BUDL staffer is currently working with five district social studies teachers to create a model curriculum to be implemented at all district high schools.

schools.

A League Flourishes

English teachers at several low-performing schools in Miami use debate in their after-school remedial reading classes.

The students in these classes have enjoyed debate so much that many of them participate



Teacher Gary Campbell, who is also a debate coach, makes sure students don't go over the time limit.

in the Miami Dade Urban Debate League, which was created last year by Barbara Garrett.

“I didn’t think they would want to spend another hour, after their reading class, practicing debate,” said Garrett. “Plus, policy debate is not easy; I mean students are given a 150-page packet on the Patriot Act.”

However, when the league scheduled its first tournament, to Garrett’s surprise, approximately 100 students wanted to participate.

Garrett’s goal for the league is to find a steady stream of funding. Although officials in Miami-Dade County Public

Schools support the league, the school district does not provide a great deal of funding.

When BUDL was initially created, the Baltimore school system was a partner in name only, but the league became so popular that the district now funds half of the league’s \$1 million budget.

Spiliadis also receives money from local foundations and corporations but is seeking national funding with the help of the Associated Leaders of Urban Debate (ALoud).

A Best Kept Secret

ALoud was founded last October to promote debate as a vehicle for urban education reform and increase student involvement in debate.

“Our motto is urban debate has served 40,000 kids, but it should be serving four million,” said Will Baker, executive director of ALoud.

Baker believes urban debate is one of education’s best

kept secrets and wants to raise the profile of debate nationally. As a result, ALoud has launched the “National Campaign for Civic Discourse” to bring together corporations, school districts and individuals to spur civic engagement and public debate.

“We want to have heads of school systems, foundations, corporate and business leaders saying ‘debate matters,’” said Baker.

ALoud has partnered with not only urban debate leagues, but organizations such as universities, and provides



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Urban Debate...

them with advice on such issues as media relations and fund raising.

Baltimore Schools CEO Copeland is a member of ALOUD's board of directors and said partnering with ALOUD has enabled the district to become smarter about marketing programs to students and stakeholders.

"We learn from other programs in urban debate about how to build our organizational capacity," said Copeland.

In addition to boosting academic achievement, debate offers urban students a way to earn money for college. "There are more than \$5 million in college scholarships available for students interested in debate," said Baker.

Students in BUDL have been so successful that Baltimore is now a top destination for college debate recruiters. "A lot of our kids are graduating and going on to win debate scholarships," said Spiliadis. "Colleges are particularly interested in urban debaters because most of the college campuses are trying to diversify."

Brion Gill, a 10th grader at Baltimore's Freedom Academy, has been participating in BUDL for two years and plans to apply for a debate scholarship when she finishes high school.

"I've actually gotten a lot out of debate; it teaches you how to talk in front of large crowds and not feel shy," said Gill, who wants to be a lawyer and writer.

"I think debate will help me do that because it teaches you how to articulate and advocate for what you believe in and how to write and manage your time."

For more information visit:

ALOUD at www.debateleaders.org or call 1-866-4DEBATE

College Board Honors Schools For AP Achievement

Several big-city schools were featured in a report recently published by the College Board, identifying the most successful Advanced Placement (AP) programs in the nation.

Advanced Placement Report to the Nation describes results from the group's AP program, which offers courses in 35 subject areas and exams through which high school students can earn college credit.

The report identifies the schools in each AP subject area that in 2005 had a larger proportion of their total school population succeed on a particular AP exam than any other school in the nation.

Seven high schools in Miami were cited for having the most Hispanic students scoring 3 or higher on AP exams in 14 different subjects such as biology, chemistry, calculus and U.S. history. A grade of 3 or higher defines success on an AP exam.

The Miami schools cited were the Design and Architecture Senior High School, Barbara Goleman Senior High School, G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School, Coral Park Senior High School, Coral Reef Senior High School, Sunset Senior High School and Miami Palmetto Senior High School.

However, they were not the only big-city schools identified in the report. Schools in such cities as Nashville, Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Greensboro, New York, Jacksonville, San Francisco, Charleston and Palm Beach were also recognized for their students doing well on AP exams.

The report can be found at www.collegeboard.com.



Jonathan Stozner, 6, draws features on a cutout of a cat while listening to classical music in his kindergarten class at Woodville Heights Elementary in Jackson, Miss. The school has been integrating art education into its curriculum.

Arts Education Gets Boost in Jackson

Six elementary schools in Jackson, Miss., have been integrating art education into their curricula as a way to engage students and improve academic performance.

The one-year pilot program has been so successful that Jackson Public Schools recently received a two-year, \$300,000 grant to expand the program to nine additional schools.

Launched in 2005, the *Ask for More Arts Collaborative* was designed to provide elementary students the opportunity of learning through the arts. The program infused the arts into daily lessons in reading, math, science and social studies.

District officials believe using the arts in classroom teaching creates hands-on experiences for students that makes learning relevant to their everyday lives and motivates them to succeed.

"We know, based on research, that learning through the arts can have a powerful impact on children's lives," said Jackson assistant superintendent Capucine Robinson. "It supports their development into whole people who can think

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Inside the Council

Dayton to Expand Single-Gender Schools

In September, Dayton Public Schools opened the doors of the Charity Adams Earley Academy for Girls, an all-girls school serving approximately 100 students in grades K-2 and is the district's first single-gender school.

Coming this fall, the school system will continue its commitment to single-gender schools with the opening of the Dayton Boys Prep Academy, an all-boys school for 160 boys in grades K-3.

District officials believe their only single-gender schools will offer learning environments that bring out the best in each gender and will provide opportunities for students to succeed academically without the distractions and social pressures that may exist in a coeducational school.

"These single-gender schools are part of the district's academic reform plan to provide parents with good research-based educational choices for their children," said Dayton Board President Gail Littlejohn.

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Arts Education...

out of the box, express their thoughts clearly, and solve complex problems."

The district will use the grant from the Ford Foundation to train teachers on how to integrate arts into the curriculum. The grant will also be used to expose students to arts organizations and individual artists who can support the lessons students are learning in the classroom.

Eventually, the district hopes the collaborative will strengthen public value for arts in the district's schools and in the surrounding community.

A study conducted by Virginia Tech found that single-gender schools have been proven to substantially increase the proportion of girls who succeed in math and science, while more than doubling the proportion of boys who do well in reading, writing and foreign languages.

The district will collaborate with the Odyssey Group, a local private education program design group, in the development of the new school.

The Dayton Boys Prep Academy will add a grade each year, eventually becoming a K-8 school. The school is open to all boys who live in the district.

Council Historic Moments

In 1969, the Council of the Great City Schools adopted its present-day name and broadened its focus to include education policy. The group began in 1956 as the Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement.



Council to Feature *Sesame Street's* 'Maria' At 50th Annual Fall Conference

Sonia Manzano, who portrays "Maria" on *Sesame Street*, will be one of the featured speakers at the Council of the Great City Schools' 50th Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 25-29, in San Diego.

Millions of children have seen Manzano on television since the 1970s, when she joined *Sesame Street*. She will address urban educators at lunch on Oct. 26.



Sonia Manzano

Under the banner "Riding the Wave of Educational Excellence," the Council will celebrate its 50th anniversary among more than 1,000 urban school leaders converging at the conference hosted by San Diego City Schools.

Manzano got her start in acting in a big-city school.

A New York City native of Latino descent, Manzano showed artistic talents when she was in junior high school, where teachers encouraged her to audition for New York's High School of Performing Arts. She was accepted and launched her acting career.

Subsequently, with a scholarship, she studied at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Then in her junior year, she returned to New York to star in the original production of the off-Broadway show *Godspell*.

Within a year, Manzano was cast as "Maria" on the *Sesame Street* TV show.

Impact of Bush Budget Worse than Projected

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

President Bush unveiled his FY2007 budget proposal on February 6, but few people were happy with the results.

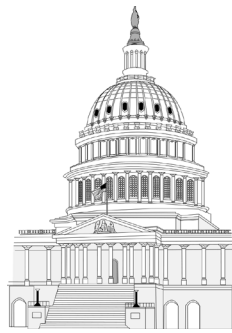
The budget package cuts \$3.1 billion from the Department of Education (including the \$1.6 billion reduction in the one-time funding for hurricane relief). The Administration requested, once again, the elimination of 42 federal education programs and a freeze on most others. A handful of K-12 programs would receive minimal increases and a new math/science initiative was proposed.

School year 2006-2007, funded under the FY 2006 budget, would be the third consecutive year in which a majority of the nation's school districts would have their federal funds under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) frozen or cut. The proposed FY2007 Budget would be the fourth straight year.

NCLB's accountability requirements continue to increase, however, as the number of schools in improvement status grows and the costs of implementing the school choice and tutoring requirements increase. These cuts and freezes, moreover, come on top of some \$1.0 billion in cuts to NCLB from the FY2006 education appropriations bill.

Special education – the largest specialized cost center in K-12 education – is a case in point. In December, Congress cut the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program (school

grants) for the first time since it began in 1976—thirty years. The Administration then proposed to restore 1 percent of the funding, leaving the program short of where it needed to be to stay even with inflation.



LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

This situation alone would be hard for school districts to handle, but the problem is compounded by the hidden costs of the 2004 IDEA amendments; the Department of Education's unwelcome interpretations of that law; and 60-odd pages of the new final IDEA regulations.

If that weren't enough, the Bush budget proposes to cut \$615 million (\$3.5 billion over five years) out of Medicaid reimbursements for school-based services.

These medically related services often include a range of intense and costly items articulated in the federally-mandated Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) of each medically fragile student.

Since the low-income students with disabilities are eligible for both Medicaid services and IDEA services, the proposed Medicaid cut would shift the costs of these services to the school district and local taxpayers.

The budget indicates that these school-based Medicaid cuts would be imposed administratively without asking for Congressional approval.

The federal education budget has now become untenable and is poised to cause real damage to the education of the nation's most vulnerable public school-children.

Your congressmen, senators (202-225-3121) and the White House (202-456-1414) are just a phone call away!

Great City Grads



Gloria Steinem

Author and Feminist Leader
1952 graduate
Western High School
District of Columbia
Public Schools

Inside the Council

\$24 Million Invested to Make Oakland A Model Urban School District

In an effort to make California's Oakland Unified School District a model big-city school system, a \$24 million initiative has been launched.

"*Expect Success!*" is an initiative based on best practices drawn from business and education to give schools the tools and resources they need to help students succeed academically.

It is being funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and several local corporations.

The \$24 million initiative is based on three elements:

- Developing high-quality small schools that give administrators control over budget and staffing;
- Enhancing accountability by providing schools with tools to assess student performance and pinpoint areas where additional improvements are needed; and
- Delivering school services in which individual schools act as customers with the flexibility to invest in the services they believe will make the biggest difference in improving student academic achievement.

"*Expect Success!*" demands student achievement, accountability, and the equitable distribution of resources, nothing more, nothing less," said Randolph Ward, state administrator of the Oakland school system.

"It insists that all who have a stake in the future of our children and public education step forward and work for change, as the quality of life and economic health of the Bay Area depend on it."

The initiative will build on the school system's efforts to boost academic performance for all of its students.

According to district officials, last year saw a 43 percent increase in the number of students enrolling in Advanced Placement courses and an even higher increase among African American and Latino students.

District officials hope to secure more funding so they will be able to fully implement the initiative in the school district by June 30, 2008.

Christina Launches Program to Address Student Issues

The Christina School District in Wilmington, Del., has launched an initiative aimed at building a bridge between school and home to help students achieve.

Thirteen staff members in the school district's Community Engagement and Advocacy Department have been designated "achievement advocates" to provide students, families, principals and teachers with an intervention and response support system to quickly resolve issues.

The advocates serve as the conduit between the school and parent, according to district officials. If anyone has a concern about a student, one can call the

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Detroit, Chicago Districts Get Student Safety Help

The Detroit school system recently teamed up with the city's clergy while the Chicago school district joined forces with the police department to prevent and combat violence in and around their respective schools.

The Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit, composed of more than 250 churches, is launching a campaign to recruit 2,000 parents for Parent Academy, the Detroit Public Schools' volunteer security corps.

The council is asking each church to contribute a minimum of 10 volunteers who will wear special jackets and carry walkie-talkies as they monitor the schools and be on the lookout for any disruptive behavior.

The council and the district also hope the volunteers will serve as role models to the students by providing a strong security presence in the schools and showing them that anti-social behavior is wrong.

"The council is hoping that by working with us to engage the students they will be able to help keep them out of trouble in an out of the classroom," said Detroit Schools Superintendent William Coleman.

The partnership with the school system is the first step in the council's plan to address violence in the city.

"Violence knows no boundaries. This is not a school problem," said Rev. Samuel H. Bullock Jr., president of the Council of Baptist Pastors. "...Nearly every incident of violence that occurs at or near our schools begins in the neighborhoods and spills over into our schools."

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In Chicago, the school system has partnered with the Chicago Police Department to create a plan to improve school safety and discipline and protect students from gang activity.

Under the school safety plan, police will increase their presence at arrival and dismissal times at schools experiencing gang activity. In addition, meetings will be held between police and students in all district high schools in an effort to identify problems and solutions before they escalate.

“Keeping gangs away from school-children remains a top priority for the Chicago Police Department,” said First Deputy Dana Starks. “We can’t be at every school every morning and afternoon, but we will focus on schools where our commitment is most needed to help prevent gang violence.”

From the Desert, A School System Is Born

One of the nation’s fastest growing school systems began from a side-board tent constructed in the middle of a hot desert.

Today, Nevada’s Clark County School District in Las Vegas has grown with the region and boasts more than 317 schools and counting, as the district begins a yearlong celebration of its 50th anniversary in March.

Fourteen separate school districts in Clark County were restructured to become the newly formed Clark County School District nearly 50 years ago, according to district officials.

The move toward a county school system began in 1955 when the Nevada Legislature mandated consolidation of school systems in the state, creating 17 county school districts.

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Achievement Advocate Hotline, and an advocate will be assigned to address the issue.

A bus driver who notices a marked change in a child’s behavior can call the hotline, so can a teacher concerned about a student falling asleep in class.

An advocate then explores any reasons for a problem, working directly with the family to find a solution.

The Achievement Advocacy Program has developed a list of “Seven Warning Signs of a Child Headed Toward Failure.” They include repeated student tardiness or absences, frequent disruptions in class, and chronic class inattentiveness.

The program is designed to keep students focused on education to increase their academic achievement, while helping parents and the community to get involved in the process.



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