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## Council Seeks Proposals for Urban Research

The Council of the Great City Schools is seeking proposals for its Senior Urban Education Research Fellowship program, recently established to facilitate collaboration between urban school districts and senior researchers.



Beginning this coming June, the Council will award three annual rounds of fellowships, with three senior researchers each receiving a \$100,000 stipend, plus fund-

ing support for school district personnel and research assistance.

Fellowships are designed to be 18-24 month research projects that have the greatest potential to improve secondary school instruction and achievement in big-city school systems.

Successful fellows must generally be researchers with at least 7-10 years of experience and have a proven track record of working with urban school districts.

To apply for the fellowship, prospective candidates should submit a letter of intent by March 23, 2007. Full proposals are due to the Council by April 23 and award decisions will be made by June.

Information about the fellowship can be found at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).

## Study Finds Lasting Benefits Of Full-Day Kindergarten

Students who attend full-day kindergarten reap greater academic benefits in subsequent grades than students who attend half-day kindergarten programs, according to a new study by Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas.

In examining the literacy gains of students in second grade who had attended full-day and half-day kindergarten classes, the study found that not only does participation in full-day kindergarten benefit students over time, but it also especially benefits students who are from high poverty households and English language learners.

"Students who attended full-day kindergarten have, on average, higher literacy scores than students who attended half-day kindergarten," says the Clark County school system's "Full/Extended Day Kindergarten Longitudinal Study 2006."

Kindergarten classes in the United States have been traditionally half-day programs. But full-day kindergarten is growing, with nine states mandating school districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs.

Academic gains are largely attributed to a longer in-

structional day for children in full-day kindergarten programs, as they receive twice the time of academic instruction than students enrolled in half-day programs.

In one of the nation's fastest growing school systems, the Clark County School District is considered somewhat similar to other large urban school districts. It has a large population of English language learners and students from high poverty households. "These students often enter kindergarten less prepared academically than their peers," says the study.

This academic year, the Clark County school system has more than 23,000 kindergarten students enrolled in 196 elemen-

**Kindergarten Study** continued on page 3

## Sensitive Issue Addressed



Superintendent Joseph Wise of Florida's Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville engages students in a discussion on "acting white." *Close-Up* story is on page 6.

## Palm Beach District Students Take Unforgettable Field Trip

Twenty television and journalism students from Atlantic High School in Florida's School District of Palm Beach County recently took a field trip that they won't soon forget.

They had an opportunity to witness the national broadcast of the CBS "Early Show" – but not in New York City, where the show's studios are located. They saw the live broadcast of the show's Super Bowl coverage in Miami Beach.

The students participated in the show, met the hosts, personalities and behind the scenes production team, which included "Early Show" director Mike Mancini, a 1982 graduate of Atlantic High.

"Mike gave the students a first hand tour of the remote set," said Atlantic High TV production teacher Amanda Chapman in the school district's newsletter.



Atlantic High School students surround CBS "Early Show" hosts Hannah Storm and Julie Chen, center, as the show's director and school alumnus, Mike Mancini, crouched second from right, and show host Harry Smith, far left, round out the memorable event.



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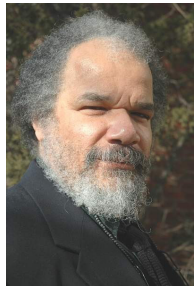
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## Minneapolis District to Keep Interim Leader As Superintendent

The Minneapolis Board of Education recently decided to keep Bill Green at the helm of the school district after he served as interim superintendent since January of 2006.



Bill Green

Green, an associate professor of history at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, is a former board member of the more than 38,000-student school district.

Board Chair Pam Costain said the board's decision to name Green the superintendent, rather than conduct a national search for other candidates, was the result of consultation with hundreds of community members as well as district staff.

In another development, Superintendent Stephen Daeschner of Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville reportedly plans to leave the district this summer to head a much smaller school

system, the Indian Prairie School District in Aurora, Ill.

Leading the Jefferson County school system since 1993, Daeschner is one of the nation's longest serving urban school district superintendents.



Stephen Daeschner

Another urban school district chief is leaving his post to become the top education official to New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer. The leader of

New York's Rochester City School District, Manuel Rivera, will oversee New York State education issues in a newly created position.

Before Gov. Spitzer offered the job to Rivera, he had been named to take the reins of the Boston Public Schools, and would've taken the helm to begin the next school year. Boston must now find someone else to succeed longtime superintendent Tom Payzant, who retired last June.

## Council Initiates Study to Improve Urban District Business Operations

In an effort to improve financial and business operations of the nation's urban school districts, the Council of the Great City Schools has launched a multi-year study to identify performance measures, key indicators and best practices that can serve as roadmaps to improve business functions.

While the "business side" of urban education has placed a greater emphasis on results over the last 10 years than at anytime in the past, Council Executive Director Michael Casserly acknowledges that the "results" have not always been measured in a way that allows a normalized comparison of one school district to another or to the business functions in other sectors.

"To be accountable, we must be able to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of our operations," Casserly stresses.

The new study was developed during the Council's annual meetings of chief operating and chief financial officers. Reports are expected to be presented to the Council's Leadership and Governance Task Force and Board of Directors meetings to be held during the organization's Legislative/Policy Conference, March 17-20.

### Kindergarten Study *continued from page 1*

tary schools in both full- and half-day classes. The school system began providing full-day kindergarten sessions in 2004 for children in elementary schools with a high percentage of poverty.

In a 2004-2005 study, the Clark County School District found "a strong positive relationship between a student who attended full-day kindergarten and literacy scores." In the current 2006-2007 study, researchers from the Clark County school system and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas found the positive relationship is sustained, especially for students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch and who are English language learners.

The study recommends, "At minimum, children in schools that have high populations of low-income students and English

language learners should be afforded the benefits of full-day kindergarten."

## Houston District Rewards Teachers With Bonuses

The Houston Independent School District recently gave nearly 8,000 educators \$14 million in bonuses in the nation's largest teacher pay-for-performance program, based on how much academic progress children are making.

Teachers received an average bonus of \$1,847 in the first year of the program to spur academic improvement in the coun-

try's seventh largest school district. "The performance pay program will be a strong part of making our schools better for many years to come," said Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra in a news release. "But we can improve the system and we will."

Doling out rewards did not occur without some controversy, as some teachers smiled, others frowned at the bonuses.



## Buffalo Schools, University Form Partnership

New York's Buffalo Public Schools and the University of Buffalo recently formed a partnership aimed at not only increasing the number of students who graduate and attend college, but also helping them receive an education that will prepare them to be successful in a global economy.

Under the new partnership, the university will become more engaged in the district's schools by expanding its existing programs and by drawing on faculty members to support students, teachers and administrators in three categories: research, practice and policy.

District and university officials believe the partnership has the potential to serve as a national model for university collaboration in improving public schools. It could pave the way for universities to work with local school systems to develop an education pipeline that directly channels students' progress from pre-school through post-graduate instruction.

Some of the specific projects that will be a part of the collaboration include a comprehensive research study that will evaluate the school system's programs, mentoring opportunities for students and teachers, and the creation of an Entrepreneurship High School to prepare students to become business owners. The university also plans to hire a special assistant to the president for pre-K through 16 education.

### Existing Program Expanded

Administrators hope the partnership will encourage more programs such as the one that was started last year by chemistry professors at the university. The professors work with middle-school teachers at a Buffalo school to improve the teaching of science and math through development of classroom materials and after-school programs that align with learning standards.

The program has been so successful that it recently received a two-year, \$485,000 grant from a local foundation to expand



University of Buffalo President John Simpson, second from left in back row, is joined by Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, second from right, Buffalo Schools Superintendent James Williams, right, and students from Buffalo's Math Science Technology Preparatory School at the announcement of the University of Buffalo partnership with the Buffalo school system.

to include 20 more teachers at a second school.

At a recent press conference announcing the partnership between the university and the Buffalo school district, Buffalo Schools Superintendent James Williams noted that nationally only 32 percent of all students graduate from high school qualified to attend a university.

"I commend UB for recognizing the challenges we face in urban education and working to develop solutions that will prepare our students to succeed," said Williams.

In the past 18 months, the Buffalo school district has introduced its three-year Academic Achievement plan, which offers students a rigorous, literacy-based curriculum. Under the plan, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students receive extended learning time, Advanced Placement courses have been established in every high school, and all ninth graders have been offered the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) exam to gauge college-readiness.

## AP Achievement Recognized

Five big-city students were among the winners of the 2006-07 Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement, which honors high school students who excel on advanced placement (AP) courses in science and math.

Up to one male and one female from each state were chosen by the College Board to receive the award and a \$2,000 college scholarship.

Students are selected for earning the highest scores on exams in seven AP courses: biology, calculus, chemistry, computer science, environmental science, electricity and magnetism and mechanics and statistics.

Students from big-city schools in Miami, Omaha and New York City were

**AP Achievement** continued on page 5

## NYC to Open 40 New Schools to Give Students Educational Options

The nation's largest school district just got bigger, with its recent announcement of a plan to open 40 new schools during the 2007-2008 school year.

The new schools are part of an effort led by New York Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and Mayor Michael Bloomberg to provide students with high-quality educational options, such as small secondary schools.

The 40 new schools include three elementary schools, 10 middle schools, nine high schools, 12 secondary schools for students in grades 6-12 and one school for grades K-8. In addition, five of the schools will be Transfer Schools for students who have dropped out or are at least two years behind in credit accumulation for their age.

The new schools are expected to serve 4,200 students next year and 15,100 students when they reach full capacity.

"I am gratified to offer our middle-school students and their parents so many promising new schools for these critical transitional years," said Chancellor Klein in a news release. "...By addressing the issues associated with low performing schools and alleviating overcrowding, administrators are providing families with options that have not existed before."

Many of the new schools will be small, in an effort to build on the success of the 197 new small secondary schools opened since 2002, according to district officials.

A recent study financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has provided funds to create small schools in the district, found that 14 new small secondary schools that opened in 2002 had preliminary graduation rates higher than the citywide average.

The study also revealed that students at these schools had high college application and acceptance rates and had a higher percentage of students being promoted to the next grade than other district schools.

Last year, 85 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders in new schools were promoted to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, compared with a citywide 9<sup>th</sup> grade promotion rate of 75 percent.

Students in the new Transfer Schools, which enroll students who are at least two years behind academically, also have shown progress. Approximately 56 percent of students in Transfer Schools have graduated, compared with a 19 percent graduation rate for similar students in regular high schools.

Additionally, 20 of the new schools opening next year will receive grants to help pay for bilingual education as well as special education teachers. In order to be eligible for the grants, schools must enroll a certain number of English language learners or students who require special education teacher support services.



## Council Fall Conference To Feature Commentator

Julianne Malveaux, an economist, author and commentator, will be one of the featured guest speakers at the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Fall Conference, Oct. 31-Nov. 4, in Nashville, Tenn. She addresses issues such as race, culture and gender in her syndicated newspaper columns and television appearances.

## Boston School Graduates Entire Class In Four Years

Boston's Health Careers Academy has achieved a feat very few schools in the nation manage to achieve: a 100 percent four-year graduation rate.

All of the school's 36 students who began the school as freshmen in 2002 graduated from the school four years later.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, only three other schools in the state had all of its students graduate in four years. Health Careers Academy was also one of nine Boston public high schools that had a four-year graduation rate higher than the state average of 80 percent.

Health Careers Academy is a college preparatory school for students interested in pursuing careers in the health profession. More than 90 percent of the students who attend the school are black or Hispanic.

In a press release, Boston Schools Superintendent Michael Contompasis praised the school for its successful graduation rate. "...Clearly, Health Careers Academy is taking a thoughtful, holistic approach to ensuring that every student earns a diploma. At this school, dropping out is simply not an option."

**AP Achievement** continued from page 4

honored, with two students from DuPont Manual High School in Louisville, Ky., receiving an award.

Teachers were also recognized for their dedication to the AP Program and two big-city teachers from Shreveport, La., and Albuquerque, N.M., received a \$1,000 cash award.

In addition, the program honors one high school in each state for leading the nation in AP participation and performance in math and science.

Four schools in Washington, D.C., Louisville, Las Vegas and Nashville received a \$1,000 grant to support math and science education.



# CLOSE-UP

## Superintendent Invites Students to Discuss 'Acting White'

By Henry Duvall

In Jacksonville, Fla., the superintendent of schools engages students beyond the classroom.

He seeks their involvement in running the school system and challenges them to confront social issues.

A few months ago, Superintendent Joseph Wise of Duval County Public Schools met with some 50 middle and high school journalists and government leaders to discuss "Acting White," an article in an education magazine.

He had asked the students to read the article in advance of the superintendent's study hall, a forum he initiated to tap student opinion.

The author of the article, in observing the effects of minority students who are shunned as "acting white," had written, "Indeed, negative peer-group pressure has emerged as a common explanation for the black-white achievement gap, a gap that cannot be explained away by differences in demographic characteristics alone."

"What does acting white mean to you?" asked Charlene Taylor Hill, executive director of the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission, who had been invited to lead the student discussion as parents, teachers and principals looked on.

An African-American male seventh-grader responded, "The way you talk!"

A white male sixth-grader chimed in, "The way you dress!"

An African-American female eighth-grader said, "The way you behave!" She gave an example from her own experience, pointing out that she is a straight "A" student and does her school work first, and then socializes with friends. Some of her African-American peers perceive this behavior as "acting white."



"We have to stop talking about acting white, acting ghetto, acting gay and whatever," Superintendent Wise insists during discussion with students.

Another black male student summed up, "Acting white or acting black – people who label you are practicing discrimination!"

To Roland Fryer, a Harvard University professor who wrote the article and has studied the social phenomenon, acting white means "a set of social interactions in which minority adolescents who get good grades in school enjoy less social popularity than white students who do well academically."

In his research, Fryer found that the acting white stigma affects not only blacks but Hispanics as well. When their grades go up, the popularity of white students increases, whereas the popularity of black and Hispanic students decreases. But what he found "particularly troubling," he wrote,

"Black and Hispanic students with a GPA above 3.5 actually have fewer cross-ethnic friendships than those with lower grades."

At the superintendent's study hall, Wise noted that it appears that high-achieving African-American males were ridiculed as acting white more than were females. Fryer's research bears this out, in that he found that "black male high achievers have notably fewer friends than do female ones."

Remarked a 12th-grade African-American male student who is in a leadership class at school and socializes with a lot of his white classmates, "It's a stereotype! If you don't act a certain way or you don't fit into a certain group, you're called names."

**Acting White** continued on page 7

**Acting White** continued from page 6

Said another black male student, an 11<sup>th</sup>-grader, "You don't see too many black boys say, 'You're smart!' You're viewed as a nerd. You don't see this with the girls; they can be smart.

"That's the way it is!" he shrugged. "If you don't play sports or you're not one of the bad kids, they'll put you down."

An African-American female student, who appeared to be a senior, noted that the assigned reading did not consider other factors, such as poverty and one's home situation. "The reason why I wanted to be smart is that my family advocated education," she emphasized.

She said that some minority students don't aspire to be smart not because they are concerned about popularity but because education is not stressed in the home. "If there's no foundation at home, school won't be a foundation either," she explained.

## Confronting Racism

Superintendent Wise said that something else needs to be considered. He illustrated this point with an anecdote. He said that he was sitting with a group of Jacksonville city leaders and talking about the school district's recent push to get more students to take Advanced Placement classes. As a result, he told the group, there are 300 percent more students in Advanced Placement now, with a 500 percent increase among black students.

"One city leader raised his hand, and said to me, 'Someone has to pick up our trash!' True story," Wise maintained. "Fire was coming out of my ears at this point. Trying to be respectful, I said, 'You're right. Someone has to pick up the trash, but it won't be the kids from Duval County. It'll be kids from neighboring counties.'"

Hill of the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission observed, "There's a perception or belief in society that we need to keep people down academically."

A white male student, who appeared to be an upperclassman, indicated that U.S. society was built on stereotypes, and that whites would be the dominant group. He asserted that the nation has used the standard of "acting white" as a measure of society.

Hill pointed out that sometimes teachers have low expectations of minority students, and the media can contribute to those low expectations as well. As a result, she said, sometimes "minority students buy into this notion that 'I'm not expected to succeed.'"

Fryer, in his research, found that acting white, which he calls a "social

disease," is more prevalent in racially integrated public schools than it is in private and predominantly black public schools.

"Blacks in less-integrated schools (places with fewer than expected cross-ethnic friendships) encounter less of a trade-off between popularity and achievement," he said in the article.

"In fact, the effect of acting white on popularity appears to be twice as large in the more-integrated (racially mixed) schools."

Hill issued a challenge for educators to look at what proportion of black students are in Advanced Placement classes versus those who might be considered in remedial classes. "Is there overrepresentation in lower ranks? If we change that balance, then maybe we can do away with the notion of 'acting white,'" she stressed.

Moreover, she explained that academics are *not* as celebrated as athletics, which may contribute to social stigmas. If more emphasis is placed on academic achieve-

ment rather than athletic prowess, and young scholars are paid as much as professional athletes, then maybe there's hope for change, she indicated.

The superintendent took finding solutions to social and academic issues to another level. "We have a whole city to change," he said. "We have to make this city as great as it can be."

Wise announced that the district is coordinating work groups of teachers, principals and students to form what he calls a "diversity council."

"We talked about some of the easy stuff today," he told the gathering. "This gets harder when you peel this onion. What happens when you peel an onion?" he asked. "It gets smelly, it makes tears.

"We have to stop talking about acting white, acting ghetto, acting gay and whatever," he insisted.

Since the superintendent's study hall in October, the Duval County Public Schools launched the Council on Educational Equity and Inclusion, designed to create a climate of appreciation for cultural differences among students and staff.

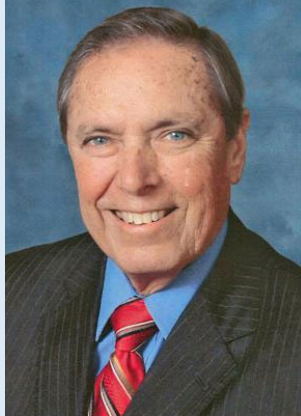


District equity officer Josephine Jackson launches diversity council.

The council hopes to eliminate the racial achievement gap by promoting cultural unity and individual growth as well as creating classroom and workplace "harmony," according to Josephine Jackson of the school system's equal opportunity office.



## Great City Grads



### Bob Martinez

Former governor of Florida

First Hispanic state leader

1953 graduate

Jefferson High School

Hillsborough County Public Schools

(Tampa)

## Detroit Requires Eighth Graders to Take College Course

Beginning next fall, 8,000 eighth graders in Detroit Public Schools will virtually start college with the aid of the Internet.

The district will require students to enroll in *Career and Professional Development 100* (CPD 100), an online course offered through a partnership with Wayne County Community College in Detroit.

CPD 100 will introduce students to critical skill sets such as goal setting, time management and career planning. The goal of the course is to increase student achievement as well as create value for future careers.

“We must start getting our children early to start thinking about what they will do with the rest of their lives...to teach them that there is a big world out there that offers a myriad of opportunities to anyone who gets a good education and is willing to work hard,” said Detroit Superintendent William Coleman in a press statement.



Students at South High School participate in an AP psychology course taught at North High School.

## Wichita Students Receive Lessons In Interactive Classrooms

Wichita Public Schools in Kansas enables its students to take classes at other schools without ever leaving their desks.

The district’s Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) program was designed to provide students with more learning opportunities through the use of technology.

Four schools contain IDL classrooms outfitted with computers, video cameras and microphones allowing students to watch a live feed of a teacher offering a class at another school.

The teacher can also see and hear the students at the remote sites. The IDL enables students to enroll in classes that may not be offered at their school.

Kathy Hanley, an AP psychology teacher at North High School, is teaching a course that is also being taken by students at South and Southeast schools. In the back of her classroom is a screen that allows her to see the students at the other sites and involve them in the lessons, while the students at the remote sites see the lessons, including an image of Hanley, on the screen.

“This has opened up many doors for us,” said IDL Facilitator Brad Niessen in *The Express*, Wichita school district’s online

**Interactive Classrooms** continued on page 9

## Urban Schools Honored for AP Performance

Several big-city schools were recently featured in the College Board’s third annual report highlighting the schools with the most successful Advanced Placement (AP) participation and performance in the nation.

*Advanced Placement Report to the Nation* describes results from the AP Program, which enables students to pursue college-level studies while still in high school. Thirty-seven courses in 22 subjects are offered.

The report identifies the schools in each AP subject area that in 2006 had a larger proportion of their total school population succeed on a particular AP exam than other schools in the nation.

Broward County Public School’s Cy-

press Bay High School in Weston, Fla., along with another school, was cited five times in the report, more than any other school in the nation.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools had more schools listed in the report than any other school district with a total of eight. Six of the Miami schools were cited for having the most Hispanic students scoring a successful 3 or higher on AP exams in 12 subjects, such as U.S. history, chemistry and environmental science.

Also cited in the report were schools in cities such as San Francisco, West Palm Beach, New York, Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Greensboro, Jacksonville, Boston, Cincinnati, Nashville and Fort Lauderdale.



## Indy Collaborative Creates Middle School Magnet Program

Indianapolis Public Schools is partnering with Butler University to help middle school students learn about law and public policy in a new magnet program.

As a result of the collaboration, Shortridge Middle School will receive a makeover, complete with a new education program, more students and a new name: the Shortridge Magnet High School for Law and Public Policy.

The program will begin with students in grades 6-9 and add grades each year until it can accommodate students in grades 6-12.

As part of the program, Butler professors will mentor Shortridge teachers, and Butler University students will help cultivate youth at the magnet school by serving as tutors in peer activities during the school day and in after-school programs.

**Indy Collaborative** continued on page 11

**Interactive Classrooms** continued from page 8

newsletter. "This is not to replace teachers, but offer new ways to deliver content and share the teachers between our schools."

The district is also looking at other ways they can use the IDL classrooms to benefit students. Plans are underway for the school system to work with Wichita State University to offer college courses, allowing students to receive dual credit. The district is also contemplating working with other districts, enabling students outside the district to take courses.

IDL classrooms can also be used for video conferences or staff development for teachers and administrators.

Hanley is thinking about using the IDL room for one of her social studies classes and having her students work with students at other schools on a project together.

"Using the technology is very easy," said Hanley in *The Express*. "It offers me another option to be creative in my classroom."



## 'Real Men Read' Kicks Off in Chicago

Actor Hill Harper from the television show *CSI: NY* shares his passion for reading with students at King College Prep in Chicago where he recently helped kick off Chicago Public Schools' *Real Men Read* program. Harper, also the author of *Letters to a Young Brother: MANifest Your Destiny*, joined hundreds of male mentors who will read books to students once a month and lead discussions at 32 neighborhood elementary schools. Sponsored by financial services firm Chase, the program was created to shine a positive light on men who value education and promote literacy.

## Council, Texas Instruments Offer Scholarship For Black Female Students

Now in its third 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.

The \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded to two African-American female students currently completing their senior years of high school in

Council-member school districts.

Over the past two years, the competitive scholarships have been awarded to graduating seniors from Council public school systems in Denver, Orlando, Chicago and Nashville.

The four winners took their \$5,000 scholarships to Stanford University, the University of Florida-Gainesville, Cornell University and Tennessee State University, respectively.

Deadline for students to apply for the 2007 Marcia Page Scholarship is May 15. Applications are available on the Council's web site at [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org).



Marcia Page

## Renewed Attention to Education

By Jeff Simering, *Director of Legislation*

After more than a year of speculation about whether it would or it wouldn't, Congress has now launched the process by which it will reauthorize the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). And the starting gun was the Bush Administration's reauthorization "Blueprint" and the release of the Report of the Commission on *No Child Left Behind*.

Before beginning the reauthorization, however, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress took up several Democratic election year promises, including the new majority's "100 hour" priorities, and it completed work on the unfinished appropriations bills from the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. The new Congress took the unusual step of passing a full-year continuing resolution for FY 2007 to fund federal government departments and programs at last year's level, while carving out modest increases for high priority programs like education. Education funding received some \$1.5 billion in new funding in the FY 2007 bill. Title I was increased by \$250 million and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was increased by \$200 million -- small increases but steps in the right direction after the funding cuts of 2006.

At the same time as Congress was taking care of unfinished business from last year, President Bush released his proposed FY 2008 budget. The U.S. Department of Education, however, was one of only three federal departments without a proposed increase. Title I was targeted for a \$1.2 billion increase, and state improvement grants would see an additional \$500 million. But IDEA was frozen and other school programs were



cut or eliminated to pay for the proposed increases in Title I. Still, most advocates came into the new year with a higher sense of optimism that the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress would look more favorably on education funding than other recent congresses.

The major development, nonetheless, was the apparent eagerness of Congressional leaders to begin tackling the renewal of NCLB. Chairmen Edward Kennedy and George Miller, and Ranking Members Mike Enzi and Buck McKeon stood together at the release of the *No Child Left Behind Commission Report* and underscored their bipartisan intent to reauthorize

the Act in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. The Senate committee has held one hearing already, featuring the academic progress of the Richmond City Schools, and has begun scheduling others. The House committee has scheduled multiple hearings in March. And an unusual joint Senate-House hearing—at which the Council of the Great City Schools is expected to testify—is planned.

Recognizing that passage of a complicated, controversial, and substantive bill like NCLB is difficult to pass in an election year, Congress has decided not to wait until 2009 but to pass legislation this year. At this point, failure to move would leave in place legislation that even proponents are having a hard time with. It does no one any good to wait. The Council will submit its recommendations to Congress this month.

## Seattle District Funding Measures Approved by Voters

Voters in Seattle recently passed two funding propositions that will be used to modernize schools, upgrade technology and pay for bilingual and special education services for the 45,800-student Seattle Public Schools.

Four high schools, two middle schools and one K-8 school will be renovated or replaced as a result of a \$490-million Capitol Program Bond, approved by 68 percent of voters. Funds from the bond will also be used to provide health and

safety upgrades and enhance air and water quality as well as make technology improvements.

In addition, voters overwhelmingly passed, by 72 percent, a \$397-million Educational Programs and Operations Levy. The measure represents 24 percent of the district's general fund budget and pays for basic educational services not fully funded by the state.

Money from the levy will help pay for instructional programs, bilingual and spe-

cial-education services, staff salaries, student activities, and maintenance for school buildings and grounds. The funds will also help the district continue to provide full-day kindergarten.

Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Raj Manhas said in a press release that passage of the two funding measures sends an important message to the district's students. "...In supporting these levies, voters are telling our students that we care about you, that we value education, and that we are willing to invest in your future."

## Newark's Character Education Program Recognized

At-risk students not only need academic assistance, but often have problems displaying good character traits, so Newark Public Schools in New Jersey has turned to the arts.

The *Character Education through Literacy and Music* program uses authors and artists to foster appropriate character traits in disengaged middle and high school students.

The program is in its third year and has been so successful that it was honored with a "Promising Practices" Award presented by the Character Education Partnership, an organization dedicated to developing young people of good character.

Newark administrators found that urban youth often define important character traits inappropriately, frequently relating such traits as courage, honesty and loyalty in terms of participation in gang-related or other violent activities.

In an effort to redefine these character attributes in a more acceptable manner, the district developed a six-week character education program, which invites writers, musicians, actors and artists to share their work with the students and tell them about their lives. Each speaker focuses on a specific character trait during their presentation and each student receives a memento from the presentation such as a CD or a copy of the book the artist has written.

Students are tested to determine their understanding of a particular character attribute and participate in follow-up activities to help reinforce what they learned.

At the end of the six-week program, students are requested to create a story, book, song or film that deals with a character trait that was the focus of one of the artist's presentations.

The character education program involves contemporary music, books, performers and writers, which appeal to the students, and school system officials have found that even the most troubled students become active participants.

Newark Schools Superintendent Marion Bolden believes it is important that students are provided with positive role models and the encouragement and support they need to make changes in the way they are living their lives.

"The *Character Education through Literacy and Music* initiative is ideal in that it gives our students insight into how artists and writers that they already respect practice such character attributes as courage, honesty, respect and integrity in their own lives."

The character education initiative is part of the district's Twilight Program, an alternative education program to help students who have been expelled from high schools, and those reentering the school system from juvenile justice agencies make a smoother transition back into the school environment.

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The partnership will also enable students to gain exposure to college by participating in education programs at Butler. Students who do well on the SAT can take introductory classes at the university and earn college credit while still in high school.

Indianapolis Schools Superintendent Eugene White says the Shortridge magnet program is just another way the district is working toward its goal of becoming a model urban school district by 2010.

"This program will provide students with a rigorous curriculum and hands-on experiences while working side-by-side with some of our city's top legal minds," said White in a news statement.

Butler University President Bobby Fong believes the partnership has the potential to revolutionize the role of a university in public education and can become a "... model of how a university/public school partnership can transform a school."

The school is scheduled to open its doors for the 2009-2010 school year, and a 35-member steering committee has been created to lead the conversion effort.

## Education Advocate Retires in the Twin Cities



Longtime Minneapolis school board member Judy Farmer, right, is joined by former St. Paul board member Becky Montgomery at Farmer's recent retirement party. Farmer had served on the board for 26 years, and received the Richard R. Green Award in 1999, the nation's highest honor for urban education leadership. Both Farmer and Montgomery had once chaired the Council of the Great City Schools' Board of Directors.



## Nominations Sought For Presidential Awards In Math, Science

Applications are now being accepted for the 2007 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

The awards honor middle school and high school teachers who display dedication to their craft and demonstrate a positive impact on student achievement in the areas of mathematics and science.

Mathematics and science teachers from grades 7-12 with at least five years of experience are eligible for the award program, which was established in 1983 and is administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation.

Elementary teachers receive the award in even-numbered years and secondary teachers receive the award in odd-numbered years.

The deadline for nominations is May 1, 2007, and teachers may nominate themselves or someone else may nominate them,

such as a principal, a fellow teacher or a student. Nomination forms can be found at [www.paemst.org](http://www.paemst.org).



### Dallas Students Write for Special Section in City Paper

Twelve students from eight high schools in the Dallas Independent School District are writing articles for *The Zone*, a two-page special section published every Thursday in the *Dallas Morning News* and delivered to every Dallas district high school on Fridays. Pictured holding a copy of *The Zone* are student journalists Rene Cedillo of Wilson High School and Bonita Murillo of Skyline High.



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